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D O L O R E S.

BY

MRS. FORRESTER,

AUTHOR OF

“FAIR WOMEN,” “MY HERO,”

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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D O L O R E S.

CHAPTER I.

LA CRUCHE CASSÉE.

AN April afternoon in fair Normandy—
an afternoon all the fresher and
brighter for the new-fallen rain that has
cleared the clouds from the sky, and left its
only trace in the glistening drops which
spangle the soft green leaves. How fair
sweet mother earth looks, how joyous, how
beaming, in the perennial youth that
comes to her alone! The heart which feels
no responsive throb to her brightness this

day must indeed be deeply scored by pain and care. All nature is awake; soft scent of flowers, sweet song of birds fill the air, not with the drowsy lulling languor of Summer time, but with the keen quickening vigour of awakening life and energy. An afternoon when one thanks God for life, when one's heart throbs with a sudden choking pity for the eyes that are closed to all this fair brightness, for the ears that no longer hear those sweet glad sounds, for the lips that are mute, ah, God! to us who once watched so wistfully for their unclosing.

Down in the valley, the winding Seine flowing at its foot, lies the ancient city of Rouen, rearing its triumphs of past generations to the blue sky—its splendid piles of Gothic architecture, its lace-work of fretted stone. Linger in the old streets, looking upwards with loving reverence at the time-worn structures, a warmer glow

comes into our English hearts, an odd, home feeling, as if this ancient city were one in which we, too, have pride, have feeling of kinship. One turns from the new parts of the town—from the gay boulevards, the clean commodious stone houses that look so solidly and unpicturesquely comfortable, from the rows of tempting shops, reminding one of a miniature Paris; and one haunts over and over again the old-fashioned, ill-paved streets, with their tumble-down houses nodding across the narrow way to each other; the venerable trophies of dead men's hands, blackened, worn, half effaced with the lapse of centuries, and all the dear remnants of time so long gone by—dear only from distance. As if human hearts beat then with other hopes and passions than to-day, as if we who live, and love, and suffer now, were different from those men and women dead

so long ago. More refinement, more education, more knowledge—a change of dress, a change of manners to-day, perhaps; but, ah me! the same capacity for suffering, the same experience of life, all the time from the creation until now. How odd it seems to think of that long gone past as a present! to think that centuries back was once to-day, to close one's eyes and see in fancy the vast multitude thronging to witness the meeting of Henry and Francis, as a few years ago one looked upon the sea of upturned faces come to gaze upon Napoleon and Victoria. But the men and women dead so long ago have no real individuality for us—Agnes Sorel and Diana of Poitiers are vague names in our ears, coming across us like the princesses of fairy tales. Yet centuries ago this old city of Rouen knew them, and people talked of them, and discussed their

charms, as freely as we do the court beauties of to-day.

What have I to do with Agnes Sorel or Diana of Poitiers, with Arlette of Falaise or Joan of Arc, with all the kings and princes, and dukes who made war, and slew, and conquered, lived, intrigued, hoped, and died in this ancient town of Normandy!

I am going to tell all you who care to hear it a simple story of a little childish, innocent maiden, who has no part nor parcel in royalty or grandeur, who knows nothing of statecraft, or ambition, or despair, but leads her own humble, simple life, without great events, but without great sorrows, up yonder in that sweet spot looking down on the old town where I stood but now, when my errant thoughts started on their vague unprofitable wanderings. Yes, you may see her now standing in that very garden which is there to-day looking back at the white

house with brown Venetian shutters, and calling in a gleeful, birdlike voice, "Marceline." An old-fashioned French garden, not too well kept, and yet not straggling nor untidy—a garden over which this April afternoon the very sweetest, softest winds of Heaven are playing. There are great masses of gorgeous tulips and double stocks of sweet-smelling wallflowers and clustering lilac, great blue and white fleurs-de-lis, growing in rows over thick borders of heaven-blue forget-me-nots, espalier pear-trees, stretching their long arms out to each other, and pink apple blossoms thick upon the old fruit-trees that line the wide gravel walk.

Some one besides you and me, reader, is looking at this Spring picture, looking with rapt eyes of keen admiration; some one who, tired of the noise and bustle of the quay, tired of fretted stone-work and painted

glass, of old histories and memories and relics, has left the town and wandered up the the Rue d'Ernemont to the Barrière, to breathe the fresh air blowing over the hills of Normandy, and watch the fair landscape lying so tranquil beneath; some one who, hidden behind the hedge of clipped elms looks at the young girl with intent eyes and murmurs,

“Greuze’s very picture!”

The resemblance could hardly have failed to strike anyone who, wandering through the galleries of the Louvre, had paused before Jean Baptiste Greuze’s sweet picture “La Cruche Cassée.” The same sweet childish face framed in deep auburn hair, the same fair skin rosy-tinted, the same deep blue unspeculative eyes and rose-bud mouth. All the same, even to the very lap full of pink apple-blossoms.

The young man stood unseen, leaning

against the narrow-barred gate, and looking with entranced eyes at the girl. It was not love at first sight. Something quite different from that keen first emotion which a breath may quicken into love—it was the feeling that appeals, not to heart or mind, but purely to the sense.

As he watches, a stout, good-humoured looking woman, with a frilled white cap and clean kerchief pinned across her breast, appears at the house door.

“Come in, Mademoiselle !” she calls.
“Your dinner is served.”

“But I am not hungry, Marcelline.”

“*Ah ça !* but one must eat even if one isn’t hungry, *petite* ; and when you but see what I have prepared—” and Marcelline concludes her sentence with an oracular nod.

“Tell me, Marcelline, what is it ?”

“But come and see, Mademoiselle.”

"Tell me first, dear, good Marcelline," cries the girl.

"Well—then, first some *bouillon*."

"Oh! it's too hot for *bouillon*," and the pretty shoulders are shrugged half up to the ears.

"Then some little—little radishes."

"Well!"

"Then a *côtelette de veau piquée*."

"Yes."

"And a *chou au gratin*."

"Ah, good; and then."

"What more would the child have?" exclaims Marcelline, slily.

"Why, does one ever dine without sweets?"

"Well, then I had to go into the Rue Beauvoisine, and I brought one of your favourite cakes, all over chocolate and white sugar."

"Oh, you dear Marcelline!" cries the

little maid, ecstatically, "then I will come and eat without being hungry. But first, pick me this sweet little cluster just above my head."

"Fie! what waste! cries Marcelline, approaching all the same, "spoiling good fruit just for a fancy."

"But they look so pretty in the vases."

"Pretty—ah, bah! and for whom? Where are the visitors to admire them?"

"But they are for me—I like them."

"A silly fancy. And in the Autumn, when you want your *tourte aux pommes* every day, I shall have to buy apples, and Blaise Allain, the *fruitier*, is a cheat."

Marcelline's strictures on the folly of plucking apple-blossoms are more practical, but certainly not so poetic as Christina Rossetti's:

"I plucked pink blossoms from mine apple-tree
And wore them all that evening in my hair.

Then in the Autumn, when I went to see,
I found no apples there."

Nevertheless she picks the desired cluster, and then the two walk back into the house and are lost to view.

The watcher turns away with a sense of disappointment; he could have looked a great deal longer at the pretty picture. He saunters down the road, now and again stopping to glance over the hedge at the numerous picturesque *campagnes* dotted about, or the sweet view lessening gradually as he descends.

"A quarter past five," he says, taking out his watch, "and the *table-d'hôte* is at half-past. I think I thall dine there after all, it's very slow having no one to talk to."

Quickening his steps, he returns to his hotel upon the quay; but his gregarious aspirations are doomed to disappointment, for at dinner he is placed between a round-

eyed German, intent on the business of the hour, and a party of unprotected British females, armour-proof in virtuous exclusiveness. Feeling rather bored after the not too *recherché* meal, he strolls out on the quay with a cigar. Crowds of men are promenading the broad walk under the trees, enjoying the relaxation from business, and yet not able to forget the commercial incidents of the day. You could not mistake them for anything but brokers and merchants—that noisy, bustling, chattering crowd, reminding one, however humbly, of Manchester and the Stock Exchange—(by the way, they dignify Rouen with the name of the Manchester of France.) There are a few women, mostly of the lower grade, in white caps and aprons (very few retain the picturesque high Norman caps and massive gold earrings), and a large sprinkling of soldiers in gay, if somewhat

tawdry uniform. The dapper young officers strut about with their small waists, gold epaulettes, and white kid gloves ; and altogether the scene is a very gay and busy one. Sir Guy Wentworth (our hero by courtesy) lounges on to the great suspension bridge, and looks down at the dull coloured Seine, where lie the big masted ships and barges in course of unloading. Great bales, baskets and cases, stone and timber, are piled all along the quay. Carts heavily laden pass to and fro. On one side of the water are the boulevards, hotels, cafés, shops, the Bourse ; on the other, great manufactories, and the poorer part of the town. Then he walks to the massive stone bridge to see the statue of Corneille, and looks down towards the green islands in the Seine, and the pretty country beyond. Women pass him with their baskets of live poultry. Numbers of

French poodles wag their tasselled tails at him, and for some time he is tolerably amused by his investigation of the natives, until an uneasy desire to see the little "Cruche Cassée," as he calls her, takes possession of him.

"How I wish I could get to paint her!" he thinks. "I should like to make a good likeness of her, and take it to the Louvre, to see if after all there is a real resemblance. I'm glad I brought my brushes—not that I'm likely to get a chance of gratifying my fancy. *Quien sabe?* Fortune sometimes favours the bold—anyhow, I shall try to see her again. I wonder who she is, and what her belongings are! She doesn't look much like a French girl.—I never will come abroad alone again," finishes up the young man, with a prolonged yawn, "it's most confoundedly slow."

The next morning, after breakfast, he

walks out of the hotel, book and pencil in hand, and takes his way up the town with the view of making a sketch of the Rue Eau de Robec, that had pleased his fancy the previous day.

“I must make friends with the aborigines, and get them to let me sit in a doorway,” he reflects, “or else I shall be the centre of attraction to all the children I saw playing in the gutter yesterday, or, worse still, those witch-like old women. I wonder why the old women abroad are so infernally ugly?”—(a most appropriate adjective by the way). And thus thinking, he arrives at the commencement of that most curious of old streets, the Rue Eau de Robec. Roughly paved it is, with no foot-path, full of old furniture shops—most of the wares exposed in the street—children are playing, and old women knitting in the gutters. And the houses, oh ! the queerest

of all queer tenements, all sixes and sevens, of different constructions, ages, and materials. Some the veriest rats' castles, built of wood, with old worm-eaten shutters and tumble-down balconies; some lath and plaster, and cross-beams overhung by great eaves; some, and these in a decided minority, of brick, with good Venetian shutters, and a solid habitable appearance. Pots of flowers are placed in all the windows, giving a cheery look amidst the general ruin—gay tulips, double stocks, roses, cinerarias and bright-eyed geraniums. Under the houses on the right-hand side coming into the town, flows a piece of water, some eight feet wide and four deep, of a dull brown, bringing with it strong odours of the tanyards it has passed on its sluggish way, with sombre tints from the great dyeing places. Every house has its bridge to the street, and here and there

are little worm-eaten wooden doors cut in the wall just above the water, out of which one could well fancy some inconvenient existence being thrust to eternity on a dark night, and no one the wiser. A stifled cry, a splash, and the dull Eau de Robec would go on its sluggish way, with only a momentary stirring of its hidden foulness.

Sir Guy, arrived at what he considers the most picturesque bend of the street, looks out for a doorway suitable to his designs. A bright-looking middle-aged woman is standing on the step of one of the most barn-like tenements, and raising his hat ceremoniously to her, the young man begs permission to make his sketch from her doorstep. She gives a good-humoured assent, rather glad of some little incident to break the monotony of every-day life in the Rue de Robec. Tumble-down houses have

no particular antiquarian interest for their inhabitants, who would probably exchange picturesqueness for solid comfort with a great deal of satisfaction. So Sir Guy makes his sketch, and chats to the woman and being naturally good-hearted and fond of children, makes friends with the blue-eyed baby Normans who come toddling about him in wide-eyed curiosity, and finally draws a little picture of them, to please the complaisant mother. He is in the act of closing his book when two figures pass the doorway, the sight of whom makes him start up, bid a hasty adieu and thanks to his new acquaintance, and start off down the street in pursuit.

It is the "Cruche Cassée" and Marcelline. They are walking briskly, and he follows at a little distance, not wishing to attract their attention. Presently they turn up towards the church of St. Ouen, Sir Guy still pur-

suing. They pass the splendid pile without even a glance at the beautiful lantern tower, or those master-piece arches over the doorway; then, as if struck by an after-thought, they turn back and enter.

The young man pauses a few moments before pushing open the door that has closed upon the girl; he has not the effrontery some men possess in pursuing and staring offensively at a pretty woman. When he enters, the pair are not visible, but walking up between those grand columns that give one a sense of awed ecstasy by the majesty of their perfection he sees the girl's form, half hidden by a pillar, gazing up with rapt blue eyes at the gorgeous rose-window above the organ.

Guy smiles to himself at the childish love of bright colour that makes her look so long at the glass stained blue and red, gold and green—that seems to him the thing

least worth looking at amidst so much symmetry of architectural elegance—such perfect harmony of shape and form. He glances round for Marcelline, and presently espies her kneeling at the shrine of the Virgin, crossing herself and gabbling a hasty prayer. When she rises, Sir Guy draws back a little into the shade of the column, and Marcelline, beckoning her charge, goes out. He follows them at a little distance as they ascend the steep Rue d'Ernemont, the girl with a light bounding step like a fawn's, Marcelline toiling heavily and pausing very often to take breath.

“But come, Marcelline!” cries the fresh young voice—“we shall not be home to-day, and the sun burns like August.”

“Ah, yes,” grumbles the older woman, stopping to pant out her words—“you young people think of nothing but yourselves. Once I too could bound up hill

like a chamois—but wait only until you have my years on your shoulders, and the asthma besides.”

“Come, I will help you,” and laughing, the girl takes her companion by the arm and begins to run uphill.

“*Tiens, tiens!* stop, Mademoiselle Dolores,” pants Marcelline—“*Mon Dieu, comme vous êtes méchante !*”

Presently they arrive at the iron gate that encloses the avenue entrance to the house, and here fresh trouble awaits Marcelline. The key has been thrown back on the grass, just out of reach.

“*Mon Dieu!* what are we going to do now?” cries the poor woman in great distress. “Pierre will be at his dinner, and Jeanneton is as deaf as a post.”

“But she will hear the bell.”

“The bell is broken since yesterday, and that stupid Pierre has forgot to mend it.

Pierre ! Pierre !” she screams as a forlorn hope. But no answer breaks the stillness.

“I will run round to the other gate in five minutes,” cries Dolores.

“Impossible, Mademoiselle,” exclaims Marcelline. “Madame, your mother, forbade me to lose sight of you, and it is more than half a mile by the road ;” all up hill too, and the poor soul groans heavily.

At this moment Guy comes forward shyly—very shyly for a handsome young fellow six feet high.

“If you permit me to try, Madame, I think I could reach the key,” he says, taking off his hat very courteously.

Marcelline turns suspiciously—then seeing such a frank, good-looking face, she smiles and answers,

“Ah, Monsieur, you give yourself too much trouble.”

CHAPTER II.

ACROSS THE HILLS OF NORMANDY.

SIR GUY broke a small bough from the trees that branched overhead, and began to pull off the twigs that covered it, Dolores watching him with shy curiosity the while. Then he pushed the stick through the bars of the gate, and after a few unsuccessful efforts, hooked up the key and handed it to Marcelline. The worthy soul was profuse in her thanks, and, feeling that such an obligation demanded something more than mere words, she invited him, albeit with some hesitation, to enter and rest himself. This was precisely what

Sir Guy wanted, but with the guilty consciousness of having sought the opportunity, he looked and felt a little doubtful of accepting the invitation. Glancing furtively at Dolores, he read such entreaty in her all unconscious eyes that he decided at once upon his answer.

“I don’t like to trespass upon your hospitality,” he said to Marcelline, “but I am making a few sketches, and if you would allow me a glimpse of the view from your garden, which I am sure must be lovely, I should feel really grateful.”

Madame Power, her lady, was from home, Marcelline replied, but she felt sure that Madame would be charmed that Monsieur should make his sketch from her garden. Madame was English. Marcelline surmised that Monsieur was a compatriot.

“Oh, *are* you English?” cried Dolores, breaking silence for the first time.

"Yes," Sir Guy answered, smiling at the eager upturned face.

"And I too."

"I thought so yesterday, when you were standing under the apple-trees," said the young man, betraying himself unintentionally.

"You saw me yesterday !" cried Dolores in surprise, a faint blush coming into her cheek like the sun-kissed side of a peach.

Here Marcelline interrupted. She did not approve of her young lady conversing with a stranger in a language foreign to her ears.

"Mademoiselle, you had best come in doors, and Monsieur will make his choice of a *point de vue* for his picture." But Dolores hesitated. "You have made some sketches in Rouen, Monsieur?" she said interrogatively, glancing at his book.

"Two or three. Would you like to see them?"

“ Ah, so much.”

He opened the leaves at his last sketch.

“ That is the Rue Eau de Robec, that we came through just now; I know,” cried the girl, clapping her hands. “ Ah, Monsieur, what could you see to draw in that ugly, tumble-down old place ?”

“ I thought it picturesque, Mademoiselle.”

“ Picturesque !” and Dolores put her head on one side and made a little *moue* that was thoroughly French. “ Picturesque ! but how poor and uncomfortable ;—and the smell ! I always run through as fast as my feet will carry me. I hate all the old parts of the town, the narrow streets, where the upper stories nearly touch across the way, like the Rue de la Grosse Bouteille, and the Rue Damiette—I never go there unless I am forced. Sometimes Marcelline takes me to the Rue de l’Impératrice and the Rue des Carmes, and we look at the shops,

or we go on the Quai, and we see all the soldiers and people walking about."

"And do you go often to the churches?"

"Sometimes on a saint's day, when Marcelline wants to say her prayers."

"Don't you think *them* very beautiful?"

A little French shrug of the pretty shoulders was the response.

"They are very cold and gloomy, and there is a musty smell always," and Dolores turned over the leaf. "Ah, that is the Place de la Pucelle!"

"Yes, I tried to give Goujon's statue of Jeanne d'Arc."

"Jeanne d'Arc? who was she?"

"What!" cried Sir Guy astonished. "You live in Rouen and don't know who Joan of Arc was?"

Dolores shook her head.

"Why, the girl who saved France from us, and whom we were cowards enough to burn."

“ Oh, the Pucelle d’Orléans—oh yes, of course I’ve heard of her, only they always call her la Pucelle here. And that is the Hôtel de Bourgthérould. Oh, how I wish I could draw like you, Monsieur !”

“ Mademoiselle !” cried Marcelline fidgeting about, “ will you please to enter ? With your hat off you will have a *coup de soleil*.”

“ I will go into the shade,” answered Dolores, taking the book and seating herself on the bank under the trees. “ You can go in, Marcelline, and prepare the *déjeûner*.”

“ Mademoiselle, you will be so good as to enter with me,” exclaimed Marcelline, reddening with anger.

“ No,” said Dolores, with a pout and a rebellious glance of the blue eyes—“ I want to see these pictures.”

Sir Guy felt in rather an awkward posi-

sion, particularly as the Frenchwoman began to dart indignant glances in his direction.

“Ah, there is the view from Bon Secours,” cried Dolores. “Yes, that is the Seine and the long pear-shaped islands in it, and there are the manufactories and the railway bridge—and, ah! yes, the Cathedral, with its frightful iron spire. Is it not frightful, Monsieur?”

Here Marcelline walked off to the house in a rage.

“I think your servant is displeased that you are talking with me,” said Sir Guy.

“Oh, she is a cross old thing,” pouted Dolores, and then she looked up in Sir Guy’s face with bright pleading eyes. “Do not go away just yet, Monsieur. I never see anyone but the clergyman and old Pierre, or sometimes the doctor when Mamma is ill.”

The girl's manner was so simple and natural, there was not a vestige of forwardness in her frank speech, and Sir Guy, looking down at the pretty up-turned face, fell in love with its sweet innocence and guilelessness.

"I should like to stay better than anything," he answered, bending down to her, "but I feel that I am an intruder. You don't know anything about me. I doubt if this will make you any wiser," he added, taking out his card.

"Sir Guy Wentworth," read Dolores; and then she blushed a little, fearing lest she had made too free with such a grand personage. "If Monsieur excuses me, I will go in to Marcelline, who awaits me. Monsieur will not leave the garden before having made his sketch." And she rose from the bank, made him a graceful little curtsey, and tripped off into the house.

“So you have chosen to come in at last, Mademoiselle,” said Marcelline, with some asperity as she entered. “I shall take care before I invite anyone to come into the garden again.”

“Is he not handsome, Marcelline?” said the little maid, meditatively, not noticing the crossness of the tone in which the remark was made.

“He is big, like all Englishmen,” retorted Marcelline; “but he has no figure.”

“You mean he has not a waist like the little French officers down on the quay. How I should like to go to England, if all Englishmen are like him!”

“Mademoiselle, you are not to think of men at all. I shall take care you see no more. What would Madame your mother say? She would never forgive me. I hope he will go soon.”

“How beautifully he draws!” sighed Dolores.

“Bah, it is his business. Some poor adventuring artist, I doubt not, though his clothes are so fine, and his linen of a dazzling whiteness. Those artists are always good for nothing.”

“But he is a grand gentleman, Marcel-line.”

“La, la, la! Your English are all milords abroad.”

“Well, then, look here,” and Dolores produced the card triumphantly.

“And what does that mean to say?” asked Marcelline incredulously.

“It means that he is a grand person, and down there at the bottom is where he lives—Wentworth Court. That means a château in a large park, like M. de Cévennes’s, where your cousin lives.”

“Ah?” said Marcelline, more respectfully. “Now, Mademoiselle, you eat your *déjeuner*, and I shall ask this fine stranger

if he will eat and drink something." And she tied on a clean apron, and walked into the garden, followed by Dolores's wistful eyes.

Sir Guy was standing with his back to the house, looking down at the lovely view, perfect in full sunshine. At his feet lay the old town, rearing its many spires to the blue sky; and on either side wound the yellow curving Seine, bounded by fields and clumps of trees, and shut in by the fair green hills of Normandy.

"Quite an English landscape," murmured the young man, opening his book.

"He is handsome, certainly," reflected Marcelline, coming down a side path and contemplating the stalwart form and handsome face she caught just in profile.

She had a genuine woman's weakness for a good-looking man.

"Will Monsieur permit me to offer him

a glass of wine ?" she said, stepping briskly up; and he turned smiling, quite surprised at so unexpected a courtesy.

"A thousand thanks, no," answered the young man—"I breakfasted quite recently."

"We have not much to offer, but if Monsieur deigns——"

"No, thank you all the same. I will just make the sketch you kindly gave me permission for, and withdraw at once."

To account for Marcelline's sudden change of demeanour we must here record that her greatest weakness was a fondness for money, and having heard much of English liberality she assumed her pleasantest manner with a view to obtaining some personal experience thereof. Nor was she disappointed, for when still lingering she begged him to remain as long as he pleased, Sir Guy, with an intuition of what was expected of him, placed a most

liberal *douceur* in her unreluctant palm.

"This is a lovely spot," he remarked, and Marcelline with a shrug and an elevation of the eyebrows admitted that it was "pretty enough."

Perhaps she found it a little dull, Sir Guy suggested.

"Dull, *mon Dieu!* yes, and in the Winter cold enough to freeze one. The wind blows in hurricanes off the hills, and comes in at the windows, which are not too secure against the currents of air."

"Then you live here in the Winter too?"

"Oh, yes, all the four seasons. It is *triste* enough for old people, but it is like being buried alive for a young creature like Mademoiselle," Marcelline responded.

She knew Paris of course? the young man surmised.

Paris! dear beautiful Paris! ah, how well!

Had she been in the picture galleries of the Louvre ?

Once, years ago—she did not remember much of it.

Had she by chance seen a picture called *La Cruche Cassée*.

Probably—she did not recollect now.

“Because,” said Sir Guy—“it is a favourite picture of mine, and your young lady here is the exact image of it—I would give five Napoleons to paint her.”

“Monsieur would really like to paint Mademoiselle ?”

“There is nothing I should like so much.”

“And how long would it take, Monsieur ?”

“Three days, perhaps.”

Marcelline began to reflect. To throw away five Napoleons would be madness. It would be a pleasure to the girl, whose life was dull enough, and Madame Power need never be the wiser for it.

“Is Monsieur serious?” she asked, looking furtively at him from under her thick eyebrows.

Perfectly so, he assured her. He would give five Napoleons into her hand when the picture was made, if she would procure him the pleasure of painting Mademoiselle.

“And—and Monsieur had no other object than the making of the picture?” shrewd Marcelline asked with some hesitation.

None, on his word of honour as a gentleman.

Then she would mention it to Mademoiselle, but she knew not if it would be agreeable to her; and Marcelline curtsied and went off to the house.

Sir Guy looked thoughtful.

“These Frenchwomen are not to be trusted,” he said to himself. “I daresay the mother thought she was leaving that

pretty child in safe hands when she went away, but this wretch would sell her to-morrow for gain." But he wronged Marcelline most grievously, for the worthy soul, in spite of her fondness for money, would have given her life rather than see a hair of her charge's head injured. She went briskly into the house, where Dolores sat before her untouched breakfast.

"What! you have eaten nothing, little dainty one!—No *saucisson*, no sardines, no radishes, not even the *petit pain sucré* I made you. *Tiens!* I shall have to send for M. Dumesnil."

"I am not hungry."

"It is the heat. Your fine Monsieur will not eat or drink either. He is a gentleman, *par exemple, ce Monsieur.*"

"Did I not tell you so?"

"And what do you think he said, *petite?*"

"What do I know!" pouted Dolores.

“He said you were like a picture in the Louvre in Paris, and he would like to paint you.”

“Oh, Marcelline !” and the girl’s colour came and went. “Did he say so?”

“Yes; but of course I said it was impossible.”

“I hate you, Marcelline,” cried Dolores, looking ready to cry.

“But what would your Mamma say? She would be ready to turn me away for only letting him into the garden.”

“Mamma need not know.”

“But there are Pierre and Jeanneton !”

“Pierre is at dinner, and Jeanneton is away in the back kitchen.”

“But a picture is not to be painted all in one day, *petite* ?”

“Dear good Marcelline !” cried the girl, jumping up and throwing her arms round the substantial form, “do let my picture be

made. I will be so good, and do just as you tell me all the rest of the time until Mamma comes home."

"*Voyons!*" said Marcelline. "On one condition then, only. I sit in the room, and you do not speak one word of English."

"I promise," cried Dolores ecstatically, and clapped her hands and danced about in unfeigned glee.

"Then I will go and tell him."

"But stop, Marcelline; I cannot be painted in this old cotton dress," and the girl's face fell. "And I have only my grey barége and my white muslin. What will he think?"

"Perhaps it is only the face he wants, and then he can fill in a satin or velvet gown to his fancy," answered Marcelline, thoughtfully.

"Go and ask him," and the woman went

out, leaving Dolores in a state of troubled uncertainty as to whether the stranger would refuse to paint her when he found she had no grand clothes.

Presently Marcelline returned.

“He is gone, Mademoiselle.”

“Gone !” and big tears gathered in the childish blue eyes, as Dolores saw her worst fears realised.

“Silly child ! he is only gone to fetch his portfolio. He had nothing large enough to paint you on. He will be back in an hour, and he begs you to keep on the same dress he saw you in, and to pass a blue ribbon through your hair.”

“Oh, Marcelline, I am so happy !” and the girl tripped off to the glass to make the desired improvement.

CHAPTER III.

HALCYON DAYS.

DOLORS POWER was a very pretty child—pouting, caressing, rebellious, pleading by turns; sunshiny and stormy in a breath—a most bewitching plaything, but, like a kitten, a plaything one tires of in time. She was very sweet in her innocence and guilelessness, very loveable, although she was frivolous and wanting in common sense, only one felt that, unless some great change came over her, she would never grow into a companion, never satisfy that craving for sympathy that a man feels who comes world-worn and weary

to the caressing arms and tender heart of the woman who loves him. As yet all was shallow on the surface with Dolores ; life meant nothing more for her than was contained in the little outside round of daily events. She had no deep, unsatisfied longings, no curiosity of the soul, no ardent desire to be anything nobler, better, more spiritual than she was.

A walk on the quay, a saunter past the shops, a new dress or ribbon, a cake from the confectioner's, these were Dolores's aspirations, Dolores's pleasures, beyond which she had no formed thoughts or ideas. Living in an ancient city like Rouen, in which each street, each house almost, has its own separate chronicle of interest, one would have imagined that her young mind would be full of curiosity concerning all those legends and traditions generally so dear to youth.

But Dolores never troubled her pretty

little head with vain speculations about the past, she had not the remotest interest in or veneration for antiquity and historical fame; she would have gone fifty times through the Place de la Pucelle without wanting to know who Joan of Arc was, or what she did for France, or why she was burnt. It did not interest her in the least that Corneille or Fontenelle were born in Rouen, any more than she was interested in its beautiful architecture or historical renown, any more than she bestowed a thought on the grand old Norman dukes or the lovely women once owning sway there, but long since mouldered into a dribblet of dust. She came sometimes to the Cathedral, but in a vague, unspeculative way.

It seemed dull and gloomy in her eyes. The perfection of elegance in its each minute detail made no harmony to her by its

perfection; the grandeur and antiquity stamped on every column and carving inspired no reverence in her mind; roused in her no reflections upon the nothingness and vanity of all that belongs to poor mortality; made no strange compassion swell in her heart to remember that all which remained of the puissant men who held the fate of kingdoms in their hands was a few grains of dust.

She flitted here and there with a sort of half curiosity, tripped after the old beadle to ask him a question now and then, looked indifferently at the pictures, cast longer glances at the magnificent stained windows, listened with a yawn to his eulogiums on the carving of the Archbishop's tombs, and ran away shuddering when he pointed out Goujon's wonderful statue of Louis de Brézés, cast after death. It was too horrid, she declared, and if Diane de Poitiers was like

the kneeling figure on the tomb, she had certainly never been beautiful.

So Dolores lived her hitherto uneventful, untroubled life up in the white house above Rouen. Her mother, silent and melancholy, spent most of the day in her room, and the girl was thrown for society and companionship upon kind-hearted, cheerful Marcelline.

Mrs. Power had been called suddenly to England a week previous to the date at which my story commences, leaving Rouen the first time for fifteen years.

Sir Guy returned even before the hour, and was ushered by Marcelline into the salon. It was a long, narrow room, with four windows draped by red curtains. The floor was of polished wood, having in the centre a thick square carpet; there were chairs and sofas of crimson velvet, and a marble mantelpiece, decorated with the

usual gilt clock and ornaments. A few good pastels hung upon the wall; in one corner stood a small rose-wood piano, with music lying open upon the desk; in short, there was every evidence of comfort and competence, if not of wealth. Sir Guy, glancing around, found the room charming; not from its furniture or decorations, but from the bright visible presence of nature, sunshine, and Spring. Great china bowls stood on the tables, filled with lilies of the valley, pink hyacinths, and blue forget-me-nots, with here and there an early rose or sprig of bright geranium. Two love-birds cooed and chattered together in their cage by the window, unprisoned birds sang sweetly in the neighbouring trees, glad sunshine streamed through every chink where it could gain admittance, and down below lay the sweetest, most peaceful landscape on which the tired

senses of man ever rested. The door opened, and Dolores came in blushing rosy red, and looking as fresh and simple as a pink-tipped daisy bud.

“It is very kind of you to let me paint you,” said Sir Guy, smiling with pleasure at the sight of her sweet face.

“It is you who are kind, Monsieur. But will you please speak in French, since Marcelline exacts it,” and she cast a glance at her *chaperon*, who entered at the moment, and went to station herself at a respectful distance (but not out of hearing) with her knitting.

“Certainly, if Marcelline desires it,” he smiled, conceiving a better opinion of her from that moment. “But I must warn you that I have sadly forgotten my French.”

“Ah! Monsieur, but you speak very well. Not, perhaps, quite like a French-

man, but still so that one understands perfectly."

The young man began to make arrangements for the sketch.

"Mademoiselle, will it tire you too much if I ask you to stand?"

"Oh, no. I prefer to stand. I like anything better than sitting, that tires one most."

"Will you permit me to place you? I want you to look just like the picture in the Louvre—your dress held up by your arms, and your hands one in the other. So! We ought to have some flowers. Ah!" and Guy went to the china bowl and pulled out the cluster of apple-blossom he had seen the girl pluck the day before, and laid them in her lap.

"Monsieur pardons the poorness of my dress, I hope," said Dolores, shyly. "The lady in the picture without doubt was very differently dressed."

“No,” Guy answered, “quite simply. Only her dress was not high to the throat; but low, with a handkerchief tied loosely over the neck. But I must imagine your pretty shoulders,” he added.

The girl blushed like a crimson rose. Marcelline looked up from her knitting, and the young man coloured and felt quite vexed with himself.

“Do you go to England sometimes?” he asked quickly.

“No, never, and I should so like it.”

“Your Mamma will take you some day, perhaps.”

“Ah! no. Mamma hates England and the English. Since we came here thirteen years ago, she has never been away from Rouen a day until now.”

“Then you have never been in Paris either?”

“Ah! no, Monsieur,” and Dolores sigh-

ed. "Is it not beautiful? Marcelline tells me it is twenty times as big as Rouen, and full of streets!—oh, much finer, and with better shops than the Rue du Grand Pont and the Rue des Carmes."

"Marcelline is quite right," smiled Guy. "You will be so charmed with the Boulevards, full of beautiful shops; and in the Rue de la Paix and the Palais Royal you will think yourself suddenly transplanted to Aladdin's cave—all the windows are full of diamonds and rubies as big as a bird's egg."

"Ah, Monsieur, I shall never see that wonderful sight," and the little maid heaved another big sigh.

"Oh yes, you will; and some day when I am walking there, I shall meet you, and stop to remind you how once you were good enough to stand for me to paint you. And then you will go to the Louvre

and see the picture of 'La Cruche Cassée,' and fancy you are looking in the glass all the while."

Time took to himself wings as the young man sketched and talked ; Marcelline knitted in silence ; and Dolores stood, the shyest, prettiest of models.

"I must not tax your kindness any longer to-day," he said, at last laying down his pencil.

"May I look, Monsieur?" and the model came forward with eager expectation in her eyes.

"Oh no, not yet. You would be sadly disgusted if I let you see it in this early state. I wish you would wait until it is finished."

Dolores looked disappointed.

"I never had my picture made in all my life."

"Not even a photograph?"

She shook her head.

"Then when I have finished this, if it does you justice at all, I will make a copy and send it you."

"Oh, Monsieur, will you really?"

"Certainly I will. I owe you something for your goodness in sitting to me."

Marcelline looked up quickly. She was afraid lest he should make some allusion to their bargain.

Guy saw the look, and smiled to himself.

"I should be very sorry for the little thing to know I pay for painting her," he thought.

Dolores accompanied him to the door.

"Come no further, Mademoiselle," cried Marcelline. "I shall unlock the gate for Monsieur." But the girl paid no heed, and walked down the avenue by his side.

"See, Monsieur, how pretty are all these

blue forget-me-nots," she said, stopping before a great sky-coloured patch.

"Will you give me one?"

For answer, she stooped and plucked a handful.

"I shall put them away with my treasures," he said, smiling at her, "in memory of this pleasant day." Then they reached the gate, and he said good-bye in English, forgetting Marcelline.

"Good-bye, Monsieur. You will come to-morrow."

"I would not leave my picture unfinished for the world," and he raised his hat to her and went away, with a sweet blushing young face and heaven-blue eyes engraven on his memory.

Dolores stood watching him until he was out of sight; then she locked the gate, and sat down on the green bank, her eyes half closed, her lips parted. It might have

been a day-dream with some girls, but with Dolores it was a soft sensation of pleasure, like that which a kitten feels lying curled up in the sunshine. In the child's nature there slumbered a vein of passion that had never been aroused. When it was called forth, it would be sudden, strong, wilful, like a breath of hot air; but as yet, to-day, it slumbered. To-morrow it will quicken, day by day the flame will be fanned, and then—poor little Dolores! If you had only never seen this good-looking painter, never had the misfortune to be like that famous picture in the Louvre galleries!

Guy found it quite impossible to complete his sketch in three days, and Marceline, having received the promised bribe, was loth to hurry such a liberal Milor. She had misgivings sometimes about his visit coming to Madame Power's ears, but, as luck would have it, Pierre was confined

to his bed with rheumatism, and she could always manage to keep Jeanneton employed in the back-kitchen while the painting went on.

Nearly a fortnight passed—the picture was not even yet completed, and Marcelline began to regret the day when she had been tempted to show hospitality to the handsome stranger. The child was in love with him—in love, and utterly oblivious of anything else in the world. The shrewd Frenchwoman knew the symptoms well enough, and when she saw the little one silent and pre-occupied, sitting under the trees in the garden, and sometimes smiling unconsciously to herself, or running to the gate an hour before the time to watch for Sir Guy, she would wrinkle her forehead and smoothe her apron uneasily, saying under her breath,

“*Mon Dieu!* what will become of the

little one when he is gone !” When Dolores took sudden fancies to go into the town and wander through the old streets she had detested before, Marcelline knew what it all meant, she had no need to glance at the blushing face when by chance they met the young Englishman in his antiquarian researches. He would join them with a smile, and send them home laden with the prettiest sweetmeats from the confectioner’s, or ornaments and pictures from the big shops—anything he thought the pretty simple little maid fancied. Her innocent pleasure smiling out through clear eyes was delicious to him who had seen so much that was artificial in the world. It was a real pleasure to him to hear the spontaneous utterance of her every thought, although there was not much depth or indication of imagination in them. She was glad, she was sorry; this pleased, that vexed her.

There was no disguise, no reticence, no shadow of insincerity about her. Marcelline had no longer to keep Argus eyes opened against the admiring glances of the young officers or students. Dolores never saw them, never saw anything or anyone but her Englishman, her *beau Seigneur*. At last, when the good woman noted how feverish and restless her charge had become, and that she thought of nothing in the world but the painting hour, and was fretful and silent when Sir Guy had gone, she took a determination.

"I am going out this afternoon, Mademoiselle," she said one day, coming down the garden in her best gown and Sunday cap.

"Let me go too, Marcelline."

"It is not possible, Mademoiselle."

"Why not?" pouted Dolores. "Where are you going?"

“First into the church—it is the day of the Virgin, you know, and the altar is all beautiful with white flowers placed by the good sisters and the school-children.”

“But I should like to see it too, Marcelline.”

“Ah, if it were only that, *petite*, but Madame Lefèvre, the wife of the *marchand de vins*, has asked me to go and see her, and your Mamma would not permit me to take you there.”

“Then let me stop in the church until you return—no harm could come to me there, and it is so dull here.”

“Be reasonable, my child. For once let poor Marcelline have a little holiday to herself.”

“Then go—go!” cried Dolores, turning away in a pet; and Marcelline went out, and by way of precaution took the key with her. She bent her steps first to the

church, where, conscience-stricken, she said a devout prayer to the Virgin; then, instead of going to visit Madame Lefèvre, she went down to the quay, and asked at the Hôtel d'Angleterre for Sir Guy. He was not in, the waiter said, but she could speak with Monsieur's valet if she pleased.

Whilst Marcelline hesitated, Sir Guy came in, and, greeting her cordially, invited her to go up to his room.

"Monsieur will pardon the liberty I take," Marcelline began, feeling very nervous and uncomfortable.

No liberty at all, the young man declared; in what way could he serve her? Secretly he thought to himself she had come to get some more money out of him.

"Monsieur will remember," said Marcelline, fidgeting about, "that, when he desired to paint Mademoiselle, he told me three sittings would suffice to complete the picture."

It was quite true, Sir Guy assented. Monsieur would pardon her ; but to-day he had made his twelfth visit.

Facts are stubborn things. Marcelline's statement was perfectly true, and the young man, not being able to deny it, remained silent.

“ Is it not so, Monsieur ? ”

He bowed. “ What is it you desire of me ? ”

“ That you should not come any more, Monsieur.”

Sir Guy started, and a shade of vexation crossed his brow.

“ Monsieur does not lack honour ; he would not harm an innocent child ? ”

“ God forbid ! ” cried the young man.
“ What do you take me for ? ”

“ Monsieur does not understand me. I do not fear he would wrong the little one, but—
but—Monsieur is a great Seigneur, and

sees many ladies, and the child never saw anyone in her life but him."

"I give you my word of honour that I look upon Miss Power as a sister," cried the young man. "You have always been present, you know I have never spoken a word to her that could deceive her into any other thought."

"That is all quite true, Monsieur, but the poor little one loves you already without knowing it; she watches for your coming, she is desolate when you are gone, all her days are spent in thinking of you, and she is no longer gay as before."

Sir Guy stood quite still for a moment before he answered. He did not doubt the woman's sincerity for a moment, he felt she was right, but it pained him to leave the pretty child who had won his fancy without a word.

"I am not to see her any more?" he said slowly at last.

“If Monsieur would send Mademoiselle an excuse—would say he was suddenly called away,” Marcelline said, hesitating.

“I understand,” Sir Guy answered. “I will do as you say.”

“Monsieur, I offer you a thousand thanks. You have a good heart,” and Marcelline turned to go.

“Good-bye,” Sir Guy said, shaking her hand, and the worthy soul in some confusion wished him “*bon voyage*.”

“*Mon Dieu!*” she said to herself, as she toiled up the Rue d’Ernemont, “but those Englishmen are odd. They understand, though, what is meant by honour.”

CHAPTER IV.

TEARS.

A FEW hours later, Dolores was standing by the garden gate, looking wistfully down the road, when a stranger, whose advancing figure she had been listlessly watching for some time, paused in his ascent and came towards her.

“Miss Power?” he said, removing his cap.

“Yes, I am Miss Power.”

Without another word he handed her a note, and, replacing his cap, turned away.

But not before, with the curiosity of a person who sees few strange faces, Dolores had remarked his features and bearing.

“What can it be?” she exclaimed, trembling with excitement as she tore open the note. It was written in English, and ran thus:—

“DEAR MISS POWER,

“I greatly regret to leave Rouen without having finished my sketch of you, but I am suddenly called away to Paris, and start to-night. I have to thank you a thousand times for your kindness and patience in sitting so long to me, and be assured that I shall not soon forget the fortnight in Rouen which you have made so pleasant for me. I will as soon as possible send you a copy of your portrait, and trust you will pardon me if I have not been happy enough to render justice to so sweet an original.

“Believe me, sincerely yours,

“GUY WENTWORTH.”

A sudden chill crept over the girl while she read, as though a cloud had come before the bright sunshine and made everything cold and dark. The colour died out of her cheek—she leaned against the gate almost gasping for breath, and then with sudden passion she flung herself upon the ground sobbing piteously. So Marcelline found her an hour later, with a strange conscience-stricken pang.

“If I had never taken his money,” she muttered to herself in a troubled voice. “If for the hateful gold I should have sold the child’s happiness! What is it, my angel?” she said softly, coming a little nearer to the stricken form. “What ails thee, *chérie*?” and she stooped down and tried to take the trembling hand.

“Go away, go away,” sobbed Dolores. “Do not come near me. I don’t want you!” and she snatched herself passionately from Marcelline’s kindly grasp.

“Tell poor Marcelline what grieves thee, little one. Hast thou hurt thyself?”

“He is gone,” moaned the poor child piteously.

“He? But who, then?” uttered Marcelline, feeling terribly guilty all the while.

“The Englishman—the handsome Sir Guy, and I shall never see him any more.”

“Does he say so?” asked Marcelline, glancing at the letter Dolores crushed in her hand. “But you know, little one, he must have gone some time, and before your Mamma returned—he had already stayed too long.”

“If he had only come to say good-bye to me! Oh, he is cruel to leave like that, when I counted the hours until he should come again.”

“Bah! Men are all cruel—they care only for themselves,” said Marcelline, at a loss how to console her.

“He is not cruel !” cried Dolores, with the pettish contradiction of a spoilt child. “He was obliged to go away suddenly—to Paris.”

“He will come again, perhaps,” uttered Marcelline in a soothing voice. “Paris is not so far.”

“How far?”

“Two hours and half by the *grande vi-tesse* ; Madame Lescaut told me last week.”

And then there was silence again, only broken by the child’s intermittent sobs, coming like the last thunder-claps in a storm.

“Hush, little one,” said Marcelline at last, putting her finger to her lips as steps were heard along the gravel walk, “here comes Jeanneton, and she is curious, like all the deaf. Do not let her see you, I pray.”

Dolores rose with a bound, and ran up the side avenue of nut-trees that led to the

back of the house, while Marcelline unlocked the gate.

“Was that Mademoiselle I saw lying on the grass?” asked Jeanneton.

“Yes,” responded the other, somewhat fiercely. “What then?”

Jeanneton shook her head.

“Ah! it was like that I became deaf, lying on the damp grass in the Spring.”

“But the grass isn’t damp to-day.”

“One never knows. And there were drops of rain on the kitchen windows.”

“Bah! that was when I watered the flowers. Good night, Jeanneton. Come early to-morrow,” and Marcelline shut the gate with an angry click, feeling remorseful about her charge.

“The little one will get over it,” she said to herself, tapping the bars with the key; “in a month, a week, perhaps, she will have forgotten him. Ah! I remember

when I was seventeen, how I grieved after the *beau Caporal* who went off to the wars ; but I forgot him in a few weeks, for Defaux, the butcher, who was short and fat, and had no waist at all—only I don't know where Mademoiselle is to get another lover, since Madame will not let a man have his nose inside the gate. *Mon Dieu !* if she finds out about this Englishman, and the little one is *entêtée* enough to tell her, then I may pack my clothes and go. Well, I should have only the regret of leaving the child."

The days went on, but Dolores showed no symptoms of forgetting. The poor child had all the more power of suffering impatient pain and desolation because she had no resources in her own mind. It was that impotent, unbearable anger of pain that makes the new prisoned bird maim his wings and beat his life out against fast-locked bars.

“I cannot bear it!—I cannot bear it! Oh! if I could only die!” she repeated ceaselessly to herself, burying her poor tear-stained face in the sofa cushions, and stamping her weary little feet on the wooden floor.

It was the third day since she had seen him, and she had scarcely touched food or slept. A sudden thought came to her, and she jumped up, her face all aflame, her hands clasped.

“I will go to him!” and her heart beat wildly. “He will not send me away—he will let me be his servant, perhaps—anything, only to be near him, to see his kind smile sometimes. If he will not have me, I will drown myself.”

The poor ignorant, wilful child began to lay her plans. To-morrow Marcelline would be gone out, it was her marketing-day; she would be absent at least two

hours. The moment her back was turned, she, Dolores, would tie on her hat, and run down by the other longer road to the town, and take the train for Paris. She did not quite know where the station was, but she had heard Marcelline say it was somewhere beyond the barracks. And for money—there was gold her mother had left in Marcelline's work-box, and she always kept the key for safety at the bottom of the old china vase in the salon. What if it were stealing! She would never cost them any more money after that, and there was a frightened sob in her voice as she spoke the words half aloud. Should she write and leave a letter to say what she had done? No! for once, a long time ago, she had read in a book how a young girl had left her home and pinned a letter of farewell on the pincushion; and through it had been traced, and brought home, and

shut in her room for whole years without speaking to a soul. Her mother was a harsh woman, quite capable of that.

Dolores went about quite blithe when her resolve was taken. Poor child! had she been able to realise the nature [of the step she contemplated, her mind would have been full of terror and misgiving; but she felt no doubts or fears yet, and Marcelline, noting the sudden alteration in her manner, said to herself,

“Ah! she begins to forget, as I forgot my *caporal*. Truly one need not trouble one’s head for the tears of children.”

Dolores did not sleep that night; and when, the next morning, she came downstairs wide-eyed, with dilated pupils, and wandered nervously from room to room, a kind of repressed excitement in her manner, Marcelline was uneasy, and said,

“What hast thou, my child? Thou

hast eaten nothing, and lookst as if thou hadst not slept."

"Oh yes, *ma bonne*, I have slept all night," said Dolores, eagerly, "and nothing ails me."

"Thou art *triste*, little one ; thou shalt come with me to the market to-day."

"No, no," exclaimed Dolores. Then, fearful of betraying herself, she added—"I care not for the market ; it wearies me to stand while you gossip with the people in the shop."

"I gossip, Mademoiselle !" cried Marcelline, indignantly. "If everyone minded their business as I mind mine, the town would not be set by the ears."

"Don't be angry, Marcelline ; I did not mean to offend you—only I don't want to go."

Never had a morning appeared so long before. The hands on the gilt clock seem-

ed to the girl's impatient eyes not to move at all as she wandered twenty times in and out of the salon during an hour. She tried to play and sing, but voice and fingers refused their office in her tremulous nervousness; she sauntered into the garden to pluck flowers for the vases, but stopped before she had gathered a handful, thinking,

“*A quoi bon?* To-morrow I shall not be here.” She bid adieu a hundred times to her furry cat and the French poodle. “I shall never see you any more—never—never!” And she squeezed them in her arms and cried a little.

Puss, responsive, emitted a great roll of paws, and the poodle walked across the room on his hind legs after her without being told. But at last the clock stood on the stroke of four, and Marcelline, who was punctuality itself, appeared on the threshold.

“Good-bye, Marcelline,” said the child, throwing her arms round the woman’s neck, hardly able to keep from betraying herself.

“Why, I am not going on a journey, *chérie*, that you should make me such an adieu,” responded Marcelline, pleased, nevertheless, at the demonstration; “in two hours I shall be back.”

The moment she was gone Dolores flew to her room, donned her best grey barége and hat, and set off for the station. She was in too hot haste to feel any nervousness or trepidation until she reached the railway, and then the noise and bustle frightened her—the shouting of porters, the luggage being flung about—all the turmoil that seems quite regular and in order to the accustomed traveller, filled her with terror. It was some time before she found courage to ask how soon the

train left; and when she at last addressed herself, timid and blushing, to a stout, red-faced guard, he took no notice of her beyond a stare.

“What is it you want to know, Mademoiselle?” asked a dark-bearded man, with a fascinating smile that frightened Dolores much more than the other one’s rudeness.

“Can you tell me when the train leaves for Paris?” she asked with a faltering voice, ready to cry.

“For Paris? In three quarters of an hour. Does Mademoiselle propose to herself to go there alone?”

“Yes, Monsieur,” stammered Dolores.

“Ah! Now if only Mademoiselle were going to Amiens, I should have been charmed to offer my escort,” said the stranger, with a familiar leer. “I am quite desolate not to be able to serve

Mademoiselle.” And as the guard began to shout frantically—“*En voiture, Messieurs et Mesdames !*” he had to hurry off without more ado.

“Three quarters of an hour !” the child said to herself in dismay. “If Marcelline should have returned to the house and found me gone, she might come here to look for me, or some one who knows me might see and stop me.” And she tried to look down, and hide her face under her straw hat, but could not baffle the inquisitive or impertinent glances of the men who lounged about and ogled her.

Then there was the terrible business of taking her ticket ; and when she saw the gold and notes flung through the pigeon-hole, a sudden fear took possession of her that the one Napoleon she had stolen from Marcelline’s workbox would be insufficient to pay for her journey. Perhaps if she

asked for a ticket, and then had not enough money, some of those rough, dreadful-looking men might be rude to her, and turn her out of the station, or even put her into prison. She underwent torments of fear and anxiety.

After a time, summoning up all her courage, she went and asked the price of a ticket to Paris. It was fifteen francs, and the official who gave it to her was polite. At last, after what seemed an age to her feverish anxiety, she was in the train, and on her way to Paris.

In the carriage with her were two good-natured-looking women, who began to ask questions.

“To what part of Paris are you going, Mademoiselle?” said one.

Dolores blushed scarlet, and shook her head.

“I do not know, Madame.”

“You are very young to travel alone,” interposed the second. “But of course your friends will meet you?”

“I do not know, Madame,” stammered Dolores again.

“But, *mon Dieu!* Mademoiselle, you cannot go wandering over Paris by yourself.”

The girl felt a vague terror lest these women should insist on finding out all about her, and taking her back to Marceline; so she turned resolutely to the window and looked out, while her two companions glanced at each other, shook their heads, and thought there was something very strange about her.

The train whizzed past the green fields and rows of trees, past the high hills and the winding Seine, past stately white châteaux, enclosed in thick forests and avenues of handsome trees, and drew up at last, just

as the dusk was falling, into the St. Lazare station of the beautiful city. There was a banging of doors, a clamour of voices, a hurrying to and fro, and with a beating, terrified heart, the child found herself pushed and hustled, not knowing which way to turn. At last she was in the street, cowering, shrinking, stared at, filled for the first time with a desperate fear lest, in this great city, she might wander hopelessly without finding the man she sought. It had never occurred to her before that there would be any doubt of her meeting Sir Guy. He was in Paris—she would go after him; and there the poor childish reasoning had ceased.

CHAPTER V.

GUY MEETS HIS FATE.

SIR GUY WENTWORTH experienced a decided feeling of chagrin at leaving Rouen without completing his picture, and bidding adieu to his pretty little friend. Something in her had charmed him—her sweet innocence, perhaps, and the child face that mirrored every thought of the simple heart. He recognised the shallowness of her nature without regretting it, since to him she was only a pretty child who had made a pleasant land-mark in the old city, and whom he should never see again. Still he would have liked to bid her farewell, to go once more up to the

Barrière d'Ernemont and see her at the gate watching for his coming, and blushing with rosy gladness when he came. What man is insensible to the charm of being watched and waited for, of being greeted with bright eyes and glad smiles? But after Marcelline's words to him, he felt bound in honour to leave Rouen without seeing Dolores again, even though he was convinced that the woman's fears had run in advance of the reality. He would be the last to bring tears to those trustful blue eyes.

Guy had his own ideas of the *devoir* of an English gentleman, and acted very fairly up to his standard—to do as you would be done by, to hold out a helping hand to friends in need, to be tender and courteous with women, liberal to the poor, and a fair landlord.

A man with ten thousand a year holding

such views is pretty sure to be popular, and in spite (perhaps because of) a few frailties the disciples of Mrs. Hannah More would have sat in judgment on, Guy was a very general favourite both with men and women. Nobody ever accused him of being very clever or a pattern young man, but amongst those who knew him, if any-one had been at a loss to illustrate the meaning of the word gentleman, I think Guy would have been the first to present himself to the mind. He left Rouen with decided regret, but with no hesitation, after Marcelline's appeal. He had gone on staying day after day in the old town, because the society of this little girl had pleased him; furthermore, because the country was pretty, the air fine, and for the present he had nothing in particular to do. Now he was forced to make some fresh plans, he did not care to be in Paris alone; he did

not want to return to London for a week or two, so he took up his quarters at the Hôtel Westminster, and wrote to his half-brother, Captain Adrian Charteris, to join him, if he had nothing better to do.

Breakfast over the next morning, he lights a cigar, and strolls out into the Rue de la Paix, thinking a good deal more of the pretty blue-eyed maiden than he would care to own. She was a sweet simple little thing, with her dear child-like ways, transparent to the very soul through those clear eyes of hers.

"If one didn't know," he muses, as he strolls along, "that those pretty little creatures, with their sweet, winning, kitten-like ways, only keep their charm as long as they are quite fresh and new! But how one would weary of the loveliest face in the world that had no mind at the back of it!—that laughed when it was

pleased, and cried when it was sorry, and had only one selfish, unreasoning consciousness of its own pains and pleasures, and none of that tact and sympathy that make a woman such a sweet companion for a man ! I'm not a David Copperfield. A Dora would wear my patience out in a month. Poor dear little soul ! I wonder if she will really take my going to heart at all ? My letter to her was such a cold, unsatisfactory thing—almost brutal, to a poor little child like that, whom it seems ridiculous to treat with so much formality. I wish I might——There wouldn't be any harm in it—by Jove ! I'll get that for her," he says, stopping before a jeweller's window, where a gold locket, set with pearls, has arrested his wandering eyes. "Poor little girl ! I daresay it will make up for the loss of me. How pretty it will look round her dear little white throat !" And

he turns to enter the shop, when a hand is laid upon his shoulder.

“How are you, Guy?”

“What, you here, Vivian!” And the two men grasp hands heartily. “Where are you staying?”

“At the Westminster.”

“So am I.”

“How long have you been here?”

“I came from Rouen last night.”

“Rouen! What the deuce were you doing there?”

“Oh, only spoiling a few pages of my sketch-book.”

“How long did you stop?”

“About a fortnight,” answers Guy, a little confused.

The other looks at him shrewdly.

“Were you sketching landscapes or faces?” he asks, smiling. Then, linking his arm in Guy’s,—“Come and have some lunch.”

“My dear fellow, it isn’t two hours since I breakfasted.”

“Never mind; you needn’t eat anything. My wife is sure to want to see you, and I’ll introduce you to a very charming woman.”

“Thanks; but——”

“But you don’t care about charming women. Never mind; come and see this one. Only for heaven’s sake don’t fall in love with her. She is an awful flirt, and lives upon broken hearts.”

“Then I’m afraid she won’t find me amusing. I’m a poor hand at making love to fashionable women. But how is Mrs. Vivian?”

“Oh, as capricious and worrying as ever,” emphatically. “If God made man, I’m sure the devil made women—confound them!”

“What, the old story!” laughs Guy.

"Of course, the old story, or I shouldn't be boring my life out here, just when the country is at its best."

"What induced you to come?"

"Why, I mean to go to Norway this Summer, so I'm paving the way by giving in to my wife a little."

"I see, but you don't say how she is?—in health I mean."

"Perfectly well, of course; but pretending to be delicate, as usual. Guy, my boy, take experience you haven't bought for once, and don't marry."

"I don't intend to do so."

"I didn't, either, but that doesn't make any difference. You meet a woman, a madness seizes you, you must have her, so you marry her, if she unhappily can't get anybody better, and lament it ever after."

"And if she won't have you," laughs Guy, "you lament her all your life as the

only woman you ever could have cared for."

"A man consoles himself for a lost love," responds his friend contemptuously, "but never for lost freedom."

"The old story!" thought Guy. "What a pity two people, both very nice in their way, can't hit it off better!"

"Here we are!" says Mr. Vivian, opening the door of a sitting-room. "Gertrude, here's Guy! Where's Milly?"

A fair woman, pretty, if a little *passée*, comes forward quickly, saying, with unfeigned pleasure, "Oh, Guy! how glad I am to see you!"

Then follow a whole string of questions. Mrs. Vivian is not the least inclined to let him off about his visit to Rouen, as her husband has done. Guy is getting confused, when Mr. Vivian rushes to the rescue.

"Confound it, Gertrude!" (impatiently),

“do change the subject. One would have thought you had lived long enough in the world to know that it is not discreet to press unmarried men with so many questions.”

“Or married ones either, perhaps!” retorts his wife, with a touch of sarcasm.

“If that is intended for me, let me assure you that my experience of one of the sex has never tempted me to pursue my researches further.”

“As great a bear as ever, you see, Guy!” says Mrs. Vivian, colouring a little, for this attached couple never spare their friends a “scene of domestic interest.”

“He always was a shocking bad fellow!” laughs Guy, good-humouredly, anxious to divert retort.

“Ah! my dear boy, it’s deuced easy for you fellows to be always good-tempered and pleasant, you’ve nothing to try you.

A lame horse, a run of bad luck on the turf, your servants rob you ; what's that in comparison with——ah ! well, least said soonest mended, I suppose.”

“Not at all,” interrupts his wife, sharply. “Now you have favoured us with so much, we should like to hear the rest.”

Fortunately at this juncture the servant appears with lunch. Guy seats himself obediently at the table, with a glass of claret and a biscuit, while Mrs. Vivian regales him with a dozen little scandals fresh from home. The door opens again, and some one comes in quietly—some one whose eyes meet Guy's as he rises. She impresses him, even at that first glance, not that she is beautiful, but there is a nameless grace, a perfect ease, an elegance about her that instinctively attract him.

“Milly ! this is my old friend Guy Wentworth—you have often heard me speak of

him? Mrs. Scarlett, Sir Guy Wentworth."

She smiles at him, and says, "I have often heard of you." And Guy thinks, What a charming voice!

Mrs. Scarlett takes the chair Mr. Vivian has placed for her, and begins to eat. Guy is divided between a desire to look at her, and the feeling that it is not usual or polite to stare at people when they are eating.

"I am afraid I'm rather late," she says.

"Time was made for slaves," responds Mr. Vivian. "Surely no man would be so unreasonable as to expect a lady to take count of time during a shopping expedition?"

"I feel the rebuke."

"No rebuke intended, I assure you. I am only too charmed to think you are amused. But seriously, I wonder now how many years of her life a woman spends in shopping?"

"Years! how absurd you are, Charles!" Mrs. Vivian interrupts.

“Not at all absurd—if the average of people who live to seventy sleep twenty-three years, and eat for eight, it is not difficult to imagine that a woman may get through a considerable number at her milliner’s and haberdasher’s.”

“Well, and if we do, a very good thing too!—it makes time seem wonderfully short; and how on earth should we get through it if we didn’t amuse ourselves in some way.”

“Improving your mind!” with a dash of sarcasm.

“Unfortunately, as you say, I have no mind to improve,” retorts Mrs. Vivian.

“I am not at all sure that men are so totally indifferent to dress,” says Mrs. Scarlett, coming to the rescue; “though I wouldn’t for an instant accuse *you* of such lightness” (with a comic little glance at Mr. Vivian, who prides himself upon not giving in to

modern innovations). “You see, men have so little scope for fancy in their present dress; but, in the good old times, when they were allowed to wear silks and velvets and laces, to paint their faces and put on patches, I daresay they thought almost as much about dress as we do.”

“I like to see ladies nicely dressed,” says Guy, feeling a desire to be on Mrs. Scarlett’s side, whatever turn the discussion may take.

“So do all sensible men,” she answers, smiling at him.

“Oh, nicely-dressed is another matter. But what do you mean by nicely?—because a woman may be *nicely* dressed in a cotton gown.”

“A *woman* might, not a lady,” maintains Guy. “Silk and lace and velvet are proper wear for ladies” (after a surreptitious glance at Mrs. Scarlett’s costume, which is composed of all three).

“Then you get from nice to extravagant!”

“No, not extravagant,” says Guy, warming to his argument. “I’ll change my sentence if I must, and say I like to see a lady handsomely dressed.”

“And I say that women think too much about dress, and spend a great deal too much money upon it. No *man* thinks any the better of them for it—only a few fools who like to encourage them in their vanity!”

“Do you admit the soft impeachment, Sir Guy?” asks Mrs. Scarlett, lifting her long lids and looking at him with smiling eyes.

Guy feels an enormous magnetic attraction towards her—he would like to sit and stare at her without saying a word. He is so entranced at meeting her eyes that he almost forgets to answer for a moment. She is obliged to say, “Do you?” again, and drop her eyes, while the faintest trace of colour mounts to her cheek.

"I beg your pardon. Do I——Oh yes——do I admit that I am a fool? Certainly," he answers, a little confused. "I think women ought to have everything that is rare and costly and luxurious, particularly if they are handsome and elegant."

"I don't follow you there," interposes Mr. Vivian. "If a woman is handsome and elegant, what does she want of adventitious circumstances? Give the adornments to the plain and ill-formed, who need them."

"Oh, I would give them to the whole sex, if it were in my power," says Guy. "They are all charming in some way or other." And he feels honestly as if he thought so for the moment, after another stolen glance at Mrs. Scarlett, who is exercising a sort of witchery over him.

"My dear fellow, you must be very

much in love with one woman to have such rose-coloured sentiments towards the whole sex."

"I!" And, to his intense disgust, Guy feels himself blushing like a school-girl.

"Your face betrays you," laughs Mrs. Vivian. "Come—confess, Guy. Was there not some lovely young woman who kept you all that long time in Rouen?"

"Indeed," stammers Guy, feeling vexed, for some unaccountable reason, at the allusion being made before Mrs. Scarlett; but her soft voice interrupts—

"Do tell me about Rouen. I have always wanted to go there so much. I don't know why I never accomplished the wish."

Guy is on the verge of proposing to make a party and go there—of offering to be her *cicerone*; but the sudden thought of Dolores stops him. He scarcely knows

why, but he feels as if it would be cruel to her to return to Rouen with another woman. So he merely tells his questioner about the places of interest to be seen, dwelling particularly on the curious old Eau de Robec.

"Milly," interrupts Mrs. Vivian, "we promised to be at Madame Chiffon's at half-past two."

"So we did. I will put on my bonnet," Milly says, rising. "Shall we persuade your husband and Sir Guy to go with us, and give us the benefit of their taste?" with a saucy look at Mr. Vivian.

"I'm an awfully good judge of bonnets," says Guy eagerly, hoping she means it seriously.

"Pshaw!" cries Charles Vivian; "come with me, and I'll show you something worth looking at. I'm going over the Emperor's stables."

“Good-bye,” Milly says, smiling.

Guy feels horribly disappointed that she has not given him her hand at parting; for the last ten minutes he has been wondering if she will. Half the sunshine seems to have fled from the room with her. She has not been gone five seconds when he wants to see her again.

“Mrs. Vivian,” he says eagerly, as he is left alone with her for a few moments, “do take compassion on me. I am here all by myself. Won’t you let me be your escort sometimes, when you want to go to a theatre, or anywhere? I know Vivian isn’t very keen about that sort of thing.”

“Thanks—yes; I shall be very glad. I often want some one to take care of me. That comes of being an old married woman.” (With a sigh.) “Mrs. Scarlett is a charming widow, so of course she has dozens of men to look after her.”

This speech envelops Guy as with a

damp blanket. To be Mrs. Vivian's escort while dozens of men, curse them ! are surrounding this woman who has so strangely fascinated him !

"I shall be charmed !" he makes answer, a little drearily. "When may I begin ?"

"To-night, if you like," responds Mrs. Vivian, giving him her hand with a coquetish smile. Poor little woman ! she is pleased at the thought of having such a stalwart, good-looking young fellow in attendance upon her.

A sunny gleam comes across her of the old times when she had half a score of lovers ready to her hand. What a fearful thing it is for a woman who has beauty, and no resources within herself, to pass the halcyon days of *la première jeunesse* !

And Guy is trying to smile, and wishing frantically that the little plump jewelled hand in his were the lithe white fingers he watched across the lunch table.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAW OF ATTRACTION.

I DON'T suppose many people believe in love at first sight. I will not argue that it is either possible or the reverse, but I believe that some persons are intensely attracted to others from the first moment of meeting—long to look into their eyes, to touch their hands, to be in their presence, and feel the strongest reluctance to be parted from them. I do not say this is *love* at first sight, but that so strong an attraction is generally followed by a violent passion on the part of the one attracted. One cannot but recognise the existence of sympathies and antipathies,

though few, perhaps, would go so far as a friend of mine, who asserts that if he were placed blindfold between two strangers at dinner, he should immediately feel which was the more sympathetic to him. Why are we acted upon by sympathies and antipathies? Who can account for them? We meet a person, against whom we immediately conceive a violent antipathy; we become silent, and oppressed by his or her presence. Is it a warning? And yet the chances are that any such person will never be thrown into antagonism with us, will never have the least power of injuring us. And then again we take a violent fancy to some one who turns out after all a very poor friend.

“We had better dine together,” says Mrs. Vivian, “and you shall go to the theatre with us afterwards. ‘*La Grande Duchesse*.’”

“I like Schneider.”

“So do I.”

“Oh! those everlasting last words,” growls Charles Vivian through the doorway. “The woman (if ever there was one) who could let a man go when he had said good-bye once, deserves to be crowned with rubies.”

“Well, I suppose I must go. Good-bye again, Guy.” Guy wishes there were more last words, and that they could be spun out until Mrs. Scarlett re-appeared; but Mrs. Vivian hurries away, and her lord says impatiently, “Come, Guy, get your hat and let’s be off.”

So they jump into a *remise* and are driven to the stables, where they criticise and admire, and for the time forget everything else. The most love-sick knight gets half an hour of oblivion in a stable full of good horses—that is to say, if he be an Englishman, and fond of horses—and what Englishman is not?

Later, Guy meets a young "blood" of his acquaintance, the Vicomte de Trois Etoiles; very horsey, and exaggeratedly English in everything but his boots and accent. He is driving a magnificent blood mare, just come over from England, up the Champs Elysées, in a tilbury by Peters. His groom is the neatest, knowingest young Cockney out—his coat is by Poole, and his brindled *bouledogue Billee* (the most ferocious of his species) has put a sum I should be afraid to mention into the pocket of Bill George.

The Vicomte insists on Guy mounting to his side, and dismisses the groom; and Guy, fancying the mare exceedingly, accedes and regrets it bitterly the moment after—for he is a good whip himself, and a genuine lover of horses. The mare has magnificent action, but that is not enough for her master—he must rattle her up to the Arc de

Triomphe at break-neck speed; and every moment he gives a little flick of the whip, making her break her trot, and get so irritable that she is covered with foam and sweat, while every vein stands out of her satin skin. If I had my own way I would make it the test of good coachmanship to drive without a whip at all—*bien entendu* that you are sitting behind a good animal.

Guy was frantic, but he was doomed now to sit and curse inwardly for at least sixty minutes, and something else he saw in the Bois did not tend to sweeten his temper. When they had made the *tour du lac* and were returning, a barouche passed them. Mrs. Vivian smiled, and waved two fingers at Guy.

Mrs. Scarlett did not even see him—she was looking at and listening to a man who sat opposite, and was discoursing to her with the greatest animation. Guy was

conscious of a wish that he had not come to Paris at all. For the first time since he turned from the jeweller's window he thought of Dolores and her wistful innocent eyes. It was much better for a man's happiness to love some little rustic maiden who never saw but him, than a fashionable woman who lived upon the breath of flattery. Of course this was only an abstract idea—he hardly knew himself that he was illustrating it by Dolores and Mrs. Scarlett.

Guy is doomed to vexation. He has arranged to join the Vivians in their rooms, and go with them to the Café Anglais, to dine before the theatre.

As he enters, Mrs. Scarlett is standing by the window with a good-looking young fellow, who is in the act of buttoning her glove. He does not desist upon the entrance of a third person, nor does Milly draw away her hand—as indeed why should

she? Guy feels unaccountably irritated. Either this cursed young puppy, as he mentally designates him, is immensely awkward, or he has the most confounded assurance, for he takes about five minutes to accomplish his task, though the glove is not in the least tight.

"Thanks very much," says Milly, smiling sweetly; and then turning to Guy—

"I hate an unbuttoned glove. Don't you?" she asks.

"I don't know. No, I don't think so. I don't much mind," Guy answers, not in the least considering the question, but jealous of the service rendered.

He is fast developing a hitherto unknown trait in his character; it is the first time in his life he has ever been jealous—indeed, he is not in the least aware that what he feels at this moment is a barb of the green-eyed monster. This is a self-sufficient, impudent

young puppy he thinks, and he would rather like to kick him.

“Awful bore an unbuttoned glove!” says our young plunger. “I say, Milly, I know I could button the first button of that other one, if you’ll only let me try once more.”

Mrs. Scarlett gives her hand, and Guy feels so annoyed that he is obliged to look another way until the operation is finished. Enter Charles Vivian hurriedly.

“I say we shall be confoundedly late. How are you, Thornton! Gertrude not here! As usual, of course. Couldn’t be punctual for anything, I suppose, except my funeral. I daresay she’d manage that.”

“Oh! yes, dear,” echoes a laughing voice behind, “I’ll take care to be in time for that.”

“How are we to go—now I mean, not to your funeral?”

“Oh! Thornton shall take you two in the carriage, and Guy and I will follow in a cab—eh, Guy?”

Perhaps it would not be altogether correct to say that Guy assents cheerfully, but he assents, and that is all which is required of him.

“Nice young fellow, Thornton!” says Mr. Vivian.

“Ah!” responds Guy, dubiously.

“Another victim of Milly Scarlett’s. By Jove! I never saw anything like that woman, there seems to be some sorcery about her. This lad is only twenty now, and ’pon my soul I believe he thinks she’s going to marry him.”

“I suppose he has known her a long time,” says Guy, a little stiffly, thinking how he heard him call her by her name.

“O Lord! yes, she used to pet him when he was a boy at Eton, and she just married.”

“How long has her husband been dead?”

“Four years; it was a rum match;” (reflectively).

“Ah?” says Guy, interrogatively.

“Biggest fool you ever saw, and she’s *such* a clever one! The most curious part of it is, she was tremendously fond of him, and nearly went off her head when he broke his neck out hunting.”

“Money, I suppose?” (tersely).

“Yes, by Jove! her jointure was three thousand a year, and she doesn’t lose it if she marries again.”

This news does not please Guy. No woman ought to have money, he thinks to himself—no nice woman, at least.

“Of course that gives a handle to spiteful people to say men run after her for her money,” pursues Charles Vivian; “but I don’t believe it makes an atom of difference in her case.”

“I should think not,” responds Guy, with an emphasis that his friend would certainly have remarked, had they not at this moment drawn up at the door of their café.

Guy has not the felicity of sitting next to Mrs. Scarlett at dinner, Mrs. Vivian is placed between her and her young adorer. A disinterested observer might be amused to watch the unmistakeable devotion of the lad. Guy is not at all amused, he can only feel lost in astonishment how a woman like Milly can tolerate such a forward young fool.

Mrs. Vivian, who all the afternoon has been flattering herself that she will make Guy the captive of her bow and spear, feels somewhat chagrined at finding how absent his replies are, and how little effect the charming toilette she has donned for his especial benefit seems

to have upon him. She really looks young and pretty to-night, and she knows it. But she cannot help being aware that Guy's whole thoughts and attention are riveted on Milly, and though they are really the greatest friends, no woman can feel that her charms are placed in the shade by those of another woman without a slight temporary diminution in her friendship.

Whatever the other three may do, it is quite certain that Guy and Mrs. Vivian do not find the dinner a very sociable or pleasant one; however, there is compensation in store for both of them, as there very often is when things seem to be going utterly wrong. Mr. Thornton, to his infinite regret, has to take his mother and sister to the Opera (a very pleasant companion, I daresay, they will find him;) and at the door of the theatre Mrs. Vivian meets a young Frenchman who was immensely

attentive to her at a ball some few nights previous, and who is only too charmed to accept a seat in her box, and devote himself entirely to her during the evening.

Guy sits at the back of the box. He can see the stage, but the turn of a well-shaped head seems to interest him infinitely more than the sprightly performance. Hitherto, he has been wont to be vastly pleased with the *chic* impersonator of "La Grande Duchesse;" but somehow it jars upon him a little to-night—he feels the uneasy sensation at his chest that corresponds to a woman's blush. While the scene between Fritz and his enamoured mistress is going forward, he half expects the ladies to rise in a paroxysm of outraged virtue and leave the theatre. Guy is quite a man of the world, but he has a trick, as many of the best of his sex have, of making too wide a gulf in his mind between virtuous women and fast

women, and setting those he cares for on a pedestal uncomfortably out of reach of the exigencies of everyday life. Few women appreciate such veneration, it *gênes* them to act up to so high a standard; but fortunately, as long as a man is really in love, a woman, do what she may, can hardly lessen his belief in her.

Milly's eyes are fixed on the stage—she neither speaks, nor turns, nor smiles; perhaps her eyes flash a little, but Guy cannot see that—he chooses to think she is disgusted. Mrs. Vivian evidently enjoys the performance immensely; her companion is lost in rapture. At the end of the scene Charles Vivian rises in his usual abrupt manner.

“Such a thing wouldn't be tolerated in London,” he says indignantly; (it was before the Offenbachian element had been introduced with so much success in

England). "I wonder modest women can sit and look on. I'm going; you'll see them home, Guy," and he vanishes impetuously.

"Where is Charlie gone?" inquires his wife, sweetly.

"He's gone to smoke a cigar," Guy makes answer, taking the chair next to Mrs. Scarlett. She turns and smiles at him; her eyes meet his, and send a thrill of pleasure to his heart.

"Charming music, is it not," she whispers.

"Awfully jolly!" And he forgets his outraged propriety, and thinks of nothing but the intense and new sensation of pleasure it gives him to sit next this woman, who is not beautiful, not moulded like a Diana or a Venus, or any other mythological personage.

She turns to him now and then. I sup-

pose there is something of the coquette in her nature ; she must know quite well the effect she is producing upon him ; there is no mistaking the expression of his eyes. But she looks round more often ; she lets her eyes linger for more than a moment on his face ; her voice falls into a lower, more caressing cadence. I wonder if the woman breathes who can see a man falling head over ears in love with her, and honestly try to prevent it ? (It will be clearly understood, of course, that I mean a man whose admiration is a credit to her.) I know Milly could not ; she was as insatiable of homage as an Eastern Queen.

Looking back to it, Guy thinks this the happiest hour of his whole life ; an entire sense of *bien-être* pervades him, his whole frame seems possessed of a happy vitality — of a keen capacity for love and enjoyment. The curtain falls on the second

act. Mrs. Vivian complains of the heat, and her companion suggests that she shall walk as far as the *foyer*. Mrs. Vivian accedes; will Milly go too? No; Milly is very well where she is. If Guy could be happier than he already is, it is when the box door closes and leaves him alone with Mrs. Scarlett. Who does not know the thrill of delight with which one sees one's best friend depart, if one is left alone with the dear *one*? Not a word may be said, not even a look exchanged, but a third person might welcomely see and hear; but there is a wonderful pleasure in the bare fact of being *alone together*.

Milly is vaguely conscious that what this man feels for her is not a transient passion or admiration (this is not the first time her magnetic power has exercised itself), and she can foresee the end. She wonders at it herself. She has met many

men who have admired, liked, loved her, but only once before a man who has been drawn to her at once, like a needle to the magnet, with this strange power. It is strange, since it is not a power that she can either compel or constrain. Nay, it is quite possible that, when she would give the world to have it at her command, it would fail her. She likes Guy; he is pleasing to her. Looks, birth, everything are in his favour, and she loves to be adored. Milly can no more forego the pleasure of being loved than the flame can extinguish itself to keep the moth from self-immolation. After all, I don't suppose it would be of the slightest use for a woman to try to make herself displeasing in the eyes of the man who is in love with her; indeed, it is the common lot of poor humanity to love best what treats it the worst.

Guy is immensely happy sitting looking into his companion's face, and listening to her bright, charming voice. Their conversation is not particularly brilliant; they do not "talk fireworks," as a newspaper critic writes; but it is very pleasant, and there is now and then a pause, almost pleasanter still. Guy's attention, as he leans towards his companion, is divided between the slender white hands, sparkling with diamonds, and two brighter jewels that shine and kindle under the low arched brows. An irresistible impulse seizes him; as he conceives the thought his heart throbs. What a terrible awe a brave man has of a pure woman!—for all brave, honest men believe in women.

His strong young voice trembles as he leans nearer towards her, and says, with an earnestness which could not be greater if he were entreating for the most mighty boon.

“May I ask you a very great favour?”

Milly is the least bit embarrassed, but she answers archly,

“You may certainly ask.”

“Might I—(very humbly in an abashed whisper)—“might I kiss your hand?”

Milly feels considerably relieved. This tremendous favour, the bare asking of which makes him tremble, is only permission to perform an act of homage, such as the mightiest sovereigns are in the habit of receiving.

“Certainly you may,” she makes answer with a gay little laugh; and he takes it with unutterable reverence, as if it were some dainty bit of china, that might slip from his hand and shiver into a thousand pieces.

And what a hand it is—how fragile, and yet what a marvellous magnetic power it has! He feels the touch of it in every fibre as it lies for a moment in his; then he stoops his lips reverently to it.

Milly thinks things are getting too serious. She is glad when at this moment the orchestra strikes up—glad that Mrs. Vivian and her escort are in the act of returning to their places. Guy is not at all glad. The curtain draws up, but he sees nothing—hears nothing of the opera—his eyes are devouring the little hand whose marvellous touch he still feels ; he is thinking that it will lie on his arm for a few moments as he takes her to the carriage.

“I beg your pardon,” he says, starting as he suddenly perceives Mrs. Vivian trying to attract his attention. It is only to draw his attention to the fact that Schneider has an entirely different set of diamonds from those she wore in the last act. He feels impatient, everything seems coarse and gross to him but the woman who has infatuated him.

The piece is drawing to a close. Guy

betakes himself to look for Mrs. Vivian's servant. When he returns, the ladies are cloaked and shawled.

"Are you sure you are warm enough?" he asks solicitously of Milly. He is not aware himself how tender is the inflexion of his voice, but Mrs. Vivian notes it, and smiles to herself. She is not jealous now. Guy feels the longed-for hand on his arm; he would like to linger for half an hour in the draughty passage, but he thinks of her, and hurries to the carriage. It has been raining; the pavement is quite wet. Milly lifts her dress and discloses a dainty little foot, shod as pretty feet should be—the illusion is complete. If Guy has one weakness greater than another, it is for a pretty foot.

They find Mr. Vivian smoking by a wood fire on their return; he is not in a particularly amiable frame of mind.

"Good night, dear," says his wife sweet-

ly; "we've had a charming evening, and won't stop for you to spoil it. Good night, Guy. Come, Milly," and *exceunt*.

"Thank Heaven for that !" says her lord, graciously, as the door closes upon the two ladies, and Guy's reluctant eyes return from following them. "Come and have a weed." For a wonder Guy would have preferred his own society; his brain is in a state of pleasant confusion, and he wants to think, but he is thoroughly good-natured, and obeys the peremptory summons cheerfully.

Charles Vivian is in a very abusive mood. Everything comes under his sovereign displeasure—his chair, the fire, the hotel, Paris, France, the French—and he gradually comes round to the real cause of his ire, namely, the morality or immorality of Offenbach's most popular opera—which is again lost in an exposition of the demerits of the sex, called by courtesy *le beau*.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLES VIVIAN ON "THE FAIR SEX."

GUY never likes to hear women abused, but he objects particularly to it in his present mood.

"I say, old fellow," he remarks with some warmth, "it's quite fair for everyone to have his own opinion, but I don't see why, if you don't care for a thing yourself, you should try to depreciate it to those who do. It's all very well to abuse women, but how the deuce should we get on without them?"

"Well, from a physiological point of view, not at all; but if they hadn't entered

into the plan of creation, I am not sure that we shouldn't have got on a great deal better. But, my good fellow, I don't set up for a woman-hater. No one enjoys the society of a clever, agreeable woman more than I do; what I complain of is being tied to a particular one for the whole of your natural life, suitable or unsuitable. The nicest woman in the world must become odious when you feel you *can't* get away from her."

"Then with such views," remarks Sir Guy somewhat sententiously, "you had no business to marry."

"Of course not, only unfortunately, you see, I did not get those views until too late. When I fell in love, I thought what a heavenly thing it would be to be always in the society of my idol! Lord! what blind fools men are! My dear boy, when you are in love you will be ready to break anyone's

head who dares to think that you could have too much of your *innamorata*."

"Very likely," says Guy absently, looking into the fire, and thinking what utter happiness it would be to go through life with Milly Scarlett.

"I think the best thing," proceeds Charles Vivian reflectively, "since landed property and the laws of society compel the sacrifice, is to marry some very simple little country girl, and mould her oneself. It wouldn't be very exciting perhaps, but at all events she wouldn't be always kicking over the traces, and asserting her will against yours."

"Pshaw!" is the impatient answer. "What pleasure on earth can a man have in a little bread-and-butter school-girl. Give me a woman of the world, brilliant, fascinating, charming. A woman whose love would raise you to Heaven, or sink

you into the lowest depths of despair."

His voice kindles, his eyes flash, the hand that holds his forgotten cigar trembles visibly.

"Guy," asks his friend quietly, "are you thinking of Milly Scarlett?"

"If I am?" he inquires stiffly, reddening a little.

"I should be rather sorry, that's all. Don't misunderstand me. I am not going to say a word against her. I daresay she'd make a very good wife to a man who wasn't jealous. She was an excellent wife to Scarlett, I believe, but since that time she has been thoroughly spoilt, and I don't believe she could exist without admiration."

"I don't suppose any sensible man would object to his wife being admired," Guy remarks with some coldness.

"No, not to a certain extent, I daresay. But the present state of society is rather

a curious one. Married women now-a-days expect (and not in vain) as much attention and admiration as a young *débutante* did formerly. I don't think it's at all a satisfactory state either for them or the men they marry, their children, household, or anything else. These cursed French manners don't suit us a bit."

"Do you mean to tell me," says Guy, indignantly, "that there are not women whom no example or customs in the world could contaminate?"

"I don't believe in any woman breathing," answers Mr. Vivian, slowly. "I like women, I admire them, I take pleasure in their society, but I have no faith in them."

Guy preserves a disgusted silence, and Charles Vivian, settling himself down in his chair, proceeds uninterrupted with his oration. He is a good talker, and a shrewd observer; he loves the sound of his own

voice, and he loves to revenge the sufferings of his married life by opening the eyes (as he thinks) of his fellow-men. But he prides himself on being strictly just—he always makes allowances for every woman but one. Thus he delivers himself:

“I say that women are false by nature, by constitution, by education, and, generally speaking, by inclination. I don’t agree with the fools who think it fine to say they are only fit to be the slaves or playthings of men. On the contrary, I think them, sometimes, if not our superiors, at all events our equals. We, for the most part, are infernally selfish. Our one great concern in life—of course I am speaking of idle fellows like you and me—is to be as much amused and as little bored as possible. We have a perpetual craving after excitement, and nineteenth-tenths of us don’t care a straw at what

expense to others, and often to ourselves, we gratify it."

"Confound it all!" breaks in Guy.
"I——"

"My dear fellow, please to understand that my remarks are not personal. It isn't a question of you or me."

"Oh! all right, I thought it was. Pray proceed," laughs Guy, good-humouredly, puffing away at his cigar, and entirely fortified by the dear image in his mind against any of the vituperations he knows to be coming. When Charles Vivian means to be very down upon women, he always commences with a mild depreciation of his own sex.

"Women love admiration, and that is the first step towards making them false. They like it to be known that they are admired, therefore they must have a little court about them; therefore they must always appear

in public with one or more devoted slaves. Now, you know, to get and keep these slaves, unless a woman is exceptionally beautiful, she must employ a certain amount of pains, and a good deal more dissimulation. She must first attract, then keep them amused, and allow them to believe that she reciprocates their regard, in a measure, at all events, for, as you and I know, Guy, there are precious few men who are inclined to waste their time on a woman they know to be utterly indifferent to them, and from whom nothing is to be hoped."

"I don't know," interposes the other. "Some fellows are so confoundedly vain, they think if a woman looks at them she's dying for them."

"Yes, some do, and a clever woman has a very easy task with them; the least pressure of the hand, one or two bewildering

glances, and a woman ought always to be able to say with her eyes twenty times more than she means. I've spent a certain number of years of my life in trying to be up to their machinations, and I've come to the conclusion that the most fascinating woman in the world, the one a man could swear was the most impassioned, is the one who feels absolutely nothing."

"Pshaw!" cries Guy, impatiently flinging away the end of his cigar, and lighting another. "My dear old boy, you're too clever by half. You're like Paul, to whom What's-his-name said, 'Much learning hath made thee mad'!"

"I'm right this time, and I'll explain how it is. Women who feel very much—"

"Oh! you admit that some of them do?"

"Hang it! don't interrupt so."

"All right—go on."

“ Women who feel very much are sure to be either too contained or too demonstrative. The one who feels nothing knows exactly what will make her most fascinating in the glamoured eyes of her lover, and in consequence succeeds to perfection. If a man could sometimes see the lady-love he has just left, with a reeling, intoxicated brain, and the profound conviction that she is the most heavenly being on earth, awfully, devotedly fond of him, of course,—if he could hear the sigh of relief when the door closes upon him, and see the triumphant flash of her eyes at the memory of how she has befooled him, it might make him feel rather small, but it would be a rattling good thing for him, all the same. In society you see a dozen fellows round the object of your affections, and perhaps you are ass enough to believe your-

self the only favoured one. What do you suppose is her attraction for them?—has she never given encouragement to anyone but you?”

“Well, old boy,” says Guy, rising to his feet, “they seem to have taken you into their confidence, and exposed their hands pretty freely; but as they haven’t done me the same favour, I shall take the liberty of continuing to believe that there are heaps of good, virtuous, pure women going about the world. Of course there are plenty of all sorts; but, considering the sort of life we lead, hang me if I know how we’re considered worthy to have a good woman’s happiness entrusted to us!”

“Your sentiments do you credit,” retorts the other, with sarcasm. “You must get up a lecture on the subject for afternoon teas this season.”

“All right,” says Guy, good-humoured-

ly. "Now I'm off. What are you going to do to-morrow?"

"I have promised to drive Mrs. Scarlett a few miles out of Paris, to see some old friends. But dine with us, if you can, at the Maison Dorée to-morrow, and we will go somewhere afterwards."

So they part. Guy is not the least inclined to sleep, so he lights another cigar and goes out into the street. The rain has ceased, it is a bright night, and he strolls about lost in thought—one thought, one idea—the perfections of his ladye-love. He still sees her, hears her voice, feels her hand in his, and he wonders in his heart if such enormous happiness is ever given to a man as to possess a woman for whom he feels what he does for Milly Scarlett. Such a woman false! tire of such a woman! Pshaw! Old Vivian must be beginning to dote. Oh! the unutterable happiness of

feeling you are tied, chained, bound to a creature like that! His mind painted Milly in a thousand ways; at the head of his table, seated beside him on his four-in-hand, riding to the Meet on the best horse in the three kingdoms, lying on the deck of his yacht, making bright the old house at Wentworth with her sweet presence. Then came a revulsion of feeling absolutely painful. How dare he think of winning her? What was there in him to make such a woman care for him?

He went to his room, and tried to sleep. His thoughts maddened him. He rose and paced to and fro, and longed frantically for the morning. It might be odd, strange, mad almost, but he would see Mrs. Scarlett the next morning, and tell her just what he felt for her.

When the broad daylight came in he fell into a feverish sleep, and slept late into the

morning. When he awoke and had breakfasted, his ideas underwent a considerable change as to the propriety of declaring his passion to Mrs. Scarlett. Oh, how grievously long that day seemed ! how utterly consumed he was by *ennui* ! what countless cigars he smoked ! In the afternoon he got a message to say the ladies were tired, so they would dine in their rooms, and the dinner at the Maison Dorée must stand over until the next evening. Since he was a schoolboy, deprived of a holiday, Guy had never felt a disappointment so bitterly. He and Charles Vivian dined *tête-à-tête* in the Palais Royal ; they were both out of sorts—the latter had quarrelled with his wife for spending too much money. She had sulked and refused to join the proposed dinner-party, and Guy, of course, was dreadfully put out at the absence of the woman he was so eager to see. The

dinner was excellent, but they both abused it and sent away half the dishes untasted.

“After all,” said Guy, “a dinner without ladies is very slow work. You must admit that, Vivian.”

“Hang the women! You and I have had plenty of jolly dinners together without them, and should have had to-night but for their fault.”

“You can’t blame them for being tired,” remarks Guy.

“Tired! pshaw! they haven’t walked five hundred yards to-day. My wife’s in a temper, and wouldn’t come to spite me, and of course Mrs. Scarlett was obliged to stay at home with her. Ah! my boy, you’ll know all these little delights for yourself one day. Your wife, like mine perhaps, will have the most extravagant tastes, and spend a small fortune on her infernal bonnets and capes—you’ll remonstrate—she

will fly into a passion and call you mean, and cowardly, and ungentlemanlike—you will retort—she will have hysterics, and for the next twenty-four hours will be exercising her ingenious mind on the problem of how she can most vex and thwart you.”

Guy is silent ; he is wishing passionately that he could spend every farthing he has on the woman he loves.

A man's mind is apt to look at these things in a different light when he is doubtful about possessing his treasure, and when it is unmistakeably, positively, unchangeably his own.

“ I hope Mrs. Vivian will be all right to-morrow,” Guy says, after the silence has remained unbroken for some little time.

“ Of course she will. She won't stop at home when she knows it doesn't annoy me, and, thank Heaven ! she can't know how angry I am, and what a stupid dinner

we've had. How she would glory in it!"

"It isn't very lively here. Let's go into the theatre."

They do so, and Guy is horribly disgusted with every woman upon the stage; so they stroll off to the Valentino—are more disgusted still, and return to their hotel—Charles Vivian to have the rest of the quarrel out; and Guy, more fortunate, to enjoy his slumbers undisturbed.

The next day was an immensely happy one—the first part, at all events. In the morning he met Mrs. Vivian and her friend in the courtyard, and was graciously allowed to escort them on their shopping expedition. Milly was as bright as a lark, full of fun and sprightliness—rallied Guy on a thousand subjects, laughed at him, smiled at him, consulted him on her purchases, and scolded him for his extrava-

gance in buying them two magnificent bouquets from a window in the Boulevards. They lunched together, and drove in the Bois, Milly provokingly declaring she would not consent to his going, as he had told her only two days before he thought it awfully stupid, and quite beneath a man to sit behind horses when he didn't hold the reins himself. But Guy laughed, and persisted, declaring that, if they didn't take him, he would hire the very worst *fiacre* on the stand, and disgrace them by bowing pointedly whenever he passed them. So they chatted all sorts of gay nonsense, and time sped swiftly, as it always does when folk are happy.

Guy will never forget that day. Poor Guy! Was Cleopatra, was Semiramis—were any of the sirens of old more seductive, more maddening than this woman,

whose glorious eyes he was looking into? Guy would not have admitted it.

How bright the day was!—how blue the sky, traversed by clouds like little white puffs of swan-down!—how the birds sang!—how blithe and *insoucians* looked the Parisians, their gaiety unshadowed by any prescience of the bitter future!

“ Du mal qu’un amour ignoré
Nous fait souffrir,
J’en porte l’âme déchiré
Jusqu’à mourir,”

hummed Guy from the lovely “Chanson de Fortunio,” as he dressed; but somehow he did not altogether feel as if his love would be ignored, and that he should carry his broken heart to the grave.

CHAPTER VIII.

DOLORES IN PARIS.

DINNER was nearly over, when a waiter came in and handed a slip of paper to Mr. Vivian. Was the gentleman there, he asked, whose name was written?—he had already taken it to three rooms.

“Sir Guy Wentworth,” read Mr. Vivian, handing it across the table.

“It is Monsieur?” the waiter inquired.

“Yes.”

Then there was a gentleman below who desired very particularly to see him.

“Excuse me a moment,” said Guy. “It is most likely Adrian. May I bring him up, if it is?”

“By all means,” and rising, Guy followed the waiter downstairs. Just outside the door he saw his servant.

“What is it, Stevens?”

“I beg your pardon, Sir Guy, for disturbing you,” said the man, hesitating a little, “but I did not know what to do under the circumstances.”

“What is it? Be quick!” exclaimed Guy, impatiently.

“Well, Sir Guy, the fact is, I just met the—the young lady at Rouen to whom you sent me with a note, and she ran up to me, crying, and asking to be taken to you, and I didn’t know what to do. I thought you wouldn’t like me to leave her wandering about the streets by herself at this time of night.”

“Good God!” cried Guy, involuntarily, a great horror creeping across him.

“And so I took her to the hotel, and

came on straight to you, Sir Guy. What had I best do ?”

“Captain Charteris has not come, has he?” Guy asked hurriedly.

“Well, Sir Guy, I just saw him in a cab as I crossed the boulevards ; but I wouldn’t stop.”

Guy muttered a furious imprecation under his breath,

“I will come at once,” he said—“stay, take a cab and go back to the hotel. If Captain Charteris is in the sitting-room with—with the lady, make some excuse and get him away before I come.”

“Yes, Sir Guy ;” and Stevens hurried off with a face perfectly inscrutable.

Guy tried to assume an indifferent expression as he remounted the stairs, but when he entered the room his face was so white and anxious that every eye turned inquiringly upon him.

“No bad news, old fellow, I hope?” Mr. Vivian said hastily.

“Oh! no, thanks—not at all. Only some one has come a long way to see me, on business, and is at the hotel waiting for me now. I am very sorry, but if you will excuse me——”

“Certainly, certainly—by all means. Shall you join us at the theatre?”

“I will if I possibly can; but——”

“All right, my dear fellow; don’t put yourself out for us. If you can, you know, we shall be very glad; if not, never mind.”

“I will send word, at all events,” said Guy, hastily. “I do not know until I get to the hotel. Good-bye.”

“*Au revoir*, I hope,” said Milly softly, as Guy went out.

He ran down stairs and out into the street in a perfect fever, and, jumping into

a cab, bade the man drive quickly to the Hôtel Westminster.

“If Adrian had only not come,” he reflected. “Of all the infernal pieces of luck I ever had, this is about the worst! Of course he’ll make something out of it, and I shall never hear the last of it. I don’t mind for myself; but that poor little thing—what, in the name of Heaven, shall I do with her?” And just then the *fiacre* clattered into the courtyard. The first person he saw was Captain Charteris leaning against the door with a cigar in his mouth.

“How are you, Guy, old fellow?” he said, as Guy jumped out.

“All right, old boy, thanks. Just pay this fellow, will you?”

“I haven’t a farthing of French money. I say, Guy, this is hot haste! I never saw you so eager about a petticoat before.”

“For God’s sake hold your tongue, Adrian. You don’t understand; I will explain everything presently.”

“I tried to make myself agreeable, but your little beauty was deucedly sulky. I couldn’t get a word out of her.”

“You’ve seen her?” exclaimed Guy, angrily. “Then I think you’d have shown better taste if you had kept out of the way.”

“My dear fellow! how was I to know? I went naturally and innocently to your sitting-room, little expecting to find it so charmingly occupied, and——”

Guy waited for no more, but hurried past his brother, and ran upstairs. He turned the handle of the door and went in. A slight figure came towards him, came tremulously, hesitatingly, and then fell at his feet with a low sob.

“Forgive me, Monsieur!” uttered a little piteous, wailing voice.

“Dolores ! my dear child ! why have you come,” cried the young man, quickly, stooping to raise her ; but she resisted his effort, and kept her face turned away from him.

“Dolores !” he repeated, surprised and pained, still holding her hands, but not trying any longer to lift her from her crouching posture.

“Oh ! Monsieur, I could not help it !” and tears came in floods now ; “you went away, and left me without a word. I could not help it. I should have died without you, and I have followed you—you will not send me away?”

He lifted her up in his arms with gentle force, and placed her on the sofa ; then he sat down beside her, taking her hand.

“My little one,” he said with great tenderness, “you have done yourself a great wrong.”

“I do not mind,” cried the child excitedly. “What is it to me, if I can only be near you, and see you smile on me sometimes. Oh, Monsieur!—Sir Guy! you won’t send me away, you will let me be your servant—your slave—anything, only to stay with you.”

A sharp pang went through the young man’s heart. He felt as if he had done this innocent child some grievous wrong.

“Does Marcelline know you have come?” he asked her, still holding her trembling hands, and speaking in the same kind voice.

“Oh no,” she cried in a terrified whisper.

“Marcelline knew nothing of my coming. You won’t send me back to her?”

“Tell me, my child,” he said softly, “how did you come without her knowing?”

“I knew she would be for two hours at the market to-day, and I planned it all last night. I took a Napoleon from her

box, and I ran all the way to the station. When I got there I was so frightened, but I took courage and came on, only when I reached Paris and found how large it was a great fear took me, and I despaired ever to find you. Many people stopped me, and would have taken me to their homes, but I refused their kindness, and then in a happy moment I met your servant."

"Thank God!" said Guy, devoutly under his breath. "Tell me, Dolores, have you had something to eat?"

"Oh no, no!" she cried excitedly. "I am not hungry. I could not eat."

Her hands were burning with fever, and the wildness in her eyes frightened him.

"When did you dine?" he asked her.

"I could not eat my dinner. I have not eaten to-day."

"My dear child," said the young man, seriously, "you will be ill; you must eat

something. Come, to please me," he pleaded, as she shook her head.

"If you wish it," she answered humbly.

Sir Guy rose, left the room for a moment, then returned.

"And now," he said, resuming his place beside her—"now you must eat and sleep a little, and early to-morrow I will take you home."

"What!" she cried, with a convulsive start, rising, and standing a little way from him, with wide-open eyes, and panting breast, "go home—to Rouen—to Marcelline! I! Oh! Monsieur!" and she threw herself on her knees, with the tears streaming down her white face, "you will not be so cruel! Let me stay—only let me stay! I will be so good, so obedient. I will do all you say. I will never trouble you—only let me stay!"

She looked so lovely—her anguish was

so real—the young man hesitated.

“Child,” he said at last, in a voice quite low and hoarse, as he bent over her, “you don’t know what you are asking.”

“I do—I do!” she cried, with piteous persistency. “I want to be always with you!”

A strong, sudden impulse attracted him to this lovely child, and made him long to say, “Stay, darling, and be happy!” So dear is it to the heart of a man to be fondly loved. But he checked the thought almost before it rose, and took both her hands in his, speaking in a low, grave voice.

“Little one,” he said, “if I were to grant what you ask I should be a villain. It would blight all your life. Some day you would hate me, and I should never forgive myself.”

“I should never hate you,” she whispered, fixing her lustrous eyes, that shone with tears, upon him.

"It cannot be, Dolores; it is impossible."

"Impossible!" she said, rising, whilst the colour deepened red upon her cheeks.

"You hate me, then?"

"Oh! child, you don't understand" (in a pained voice). "*I* hate you! No, I love you like a dear little sister, whom I would shield from every thought of harm."

"Then let me stay and be your sister."

"But, little one, it is not possible. You do not know the ways of the world."

"I don't want to know them, if they take me from you. Oh! Sir Guy, do not think me bold and presumptuous that I entreat you so; but I shall break my heart if you send me away."

"Dear child, it is for your own sake," cried the young man, half beside himself. "I would gladly have you always with me."

"Why should you mind, if I do not?" she urged, impetuously.

She looked so lovely in her impassioned eagerness—this little girl, half French, half English, praying so passionately in her childish innocence, that Sir Guy was half unmanned. The door opened, and his servant entered with a tray.

“I must leave you for a few minutes,” he whispered. “Let me find you have eaten when I return.”

“You will come back?” she entreated, with frightened eyes.

“Yes, I promise,” he answered, reassuringly. “In half an hour, at the furthest.”

And then he went downstairs, and, crossing the courtyard of the hotel, walked out into the busy street. A gay crowd passed him—laughing, chatting, pausing every now and then to look in the brilliantly-lighted shops at the great diamonds and emeralds, the pearls and rubies, flashing in

the gaslight. He crossed over, away from the sounds and sights that jarred on him, to the Place Vendôme, and stood by the railings of the great column of the trophies of France.

“What shall I do?” he asked himself a thousand times, as the kneeling figure, with great wistful eyes, haunted him. “Poor little soul! Perhaps they have already raised a hue and cry after her in the town, and all is known, or guessed, even now. How can I send her back to face the torrent of reproaches, the sneers, the cruel insults, that will be heaped upon her, pure and innocent though she is? Surely it would be better to let her stay. Whatever happened she could not be so miserable with me as left to the tender mercies of her own sex. How cruel women can be to each other! And she loves me with the first strong impulse of

her unsullied child's heart. Perhaps I shall never be loved like this again." And then he thought of Milly, brilliant, winning, gracious, and his heart was torn by fresh emotions. "To be loved by a woman like that!" he said to himself; "a woman of whom one could never tire, of whom one would be so proud! She may never care for me, I may never be able to win her, but, even with the barest shadow of a possibility of such happiness, to cast it from me, and, out of simple compassion, to tie my whole life to a child, a doll, who would weary me to death in a month—impossible! Poor little soul! If I have wronged her by thoughtlessness and want of consideration, I would bear any pain, or make any sacrifice, to atone to her, and bring back happiness to her poor little heart; but to marry her—impossible. And I swear before heaven she never shall suffer

harm or wrong through me, or anyone else, while I have a strong arm to shield her. Poor Marcelline ! what an agony she will be in ! If she only has the sense to keep everything quiet——”

A sudden thought struck Sir Guy, and he went back to the hotel, and sent for his servant.

“Stevens,” he said, when the man came, “I want you to find out about the trains for Rouen. You must go by the very next yourself. I have a letter for you to take to the house up by the Barrière d’Ernemont—and I am going myself, early to-morrow.”

“Very well, sir. I will inquire about the trains, and come back for the letter. How soon will it be ready ?”

“In five minutes.” And Guy went to his room and wrote :

“Miss Power is in Paris, and quite safe.

If possible, let no one know that she is absent from home. I swear to bring her back to you to-morrow. She is as safe under my care as if she were my own sister."

Then he went to look for his brother, and found him dining in the *salle-à-manger*.

"Adrian," he said, sitting down opposite to him at the little table, "I want you to do me a favour."

"All right, old fellow. What is it?"

"The Vivians are here; I've just been dining with them, and we were to have gone to the theatre together. Will you go instead, and say that business detains me all this evening and to-morrow, but I hope to see them in a day or two, and make my excuses?"

"Oh yes. I'll say it's business of a most important nature; couldn't possibly wait. I say, Guy, I'm not inquisitive—I know it's

not good form to ask questions—but this child—she isn't much more than a baby—what the deuce is she doing in your rooms? It's not quite your style."

"Don't run away with any false notions," answered Guy, hurriedly. "I can't explain it to you now, but you may take my word of honour that she is a lady, and as pure and innocent as a child at its mother's breast. She lost her way in Paris; Stevens luckily met her, and I am going to take her home."

Captain Charteris gave a suppressed whistle, and looked incredulous.

"I haven't time to bandy words," said Guy, hotly. "Will you do as I ask you?"

"The Vivians are rather heavy after a long day's travelling, my dear fellow."

"There is another lady with them." And Guy coloured a little, and felt almost

jealous that his brother was going to see her.

“Nice?” Captain Charteris asked.

“Yes,” briefly.

“All right, then, I’ll go. No occasion to dress, I suppose?”

“I daresay they’ll excuse that. I may be back to-morrow night. At all events, I shall rely on your explaining everything, so that——”

“No one suspects the truth.”

You can’t knock a man down for curving the corners of his lips upwards, or elevating his eyebrows the sixteenth part of an inch, particularly if the man happens to be your brother. For the moment Guy rather wished you could.

CHAPTER IX.

POOR DOLORES.

SIR GUY went back to the little room where he had left Dolores. He found her cowering up in a corner of the sofa, and glancing towards the table, he perceived that she had not touched the food which had been brought her.

“You promised me to eat something,” he said, going up to her. “Is there nothing here you like?”

“Oh ! yes, indeed there is ; but I cannot eat.”

“Come, my child, you *must* try. Now, sit down here. I will have some with you,

and you shall pour out the coffee. Why, it is quite cold! I will ring for some more."

The child's eyes glistened. If he would eat that was different, and she would so like to pour out coffee for him. Then he talked kindly to her, and coaxed her, and she began to smile and feel happy; she thought now he would always let her stay.

"It is not half sweet enough," he said, holding his cup across to her; and she smiled at him and popped a great lump of sugar into it.

At that moment a waiter threw the door open and came in, and some one passed along the corridor. It was Mrs. Scarlett. She half paused in her surprise at seeing Sir Guy sitting opposite to a pretty, smiling young girl, and then hurried on; no one in the room observed her.

Guy, all unconscious, was sitting *tête-à-tête* with Dolores in the little salon at the hotel. She dared not ask him any questions about the morrow, and he never once alluded to it, but talked to her of the wonders of Paris, and kept her smiling and amused. Presently he took out his watch.

“It is time for all good children to be in bed,” he said, rising. “I shall send for the *femme de chambre*, and she will do everything for you. To-morrow you must get up early, and come in to breakfast with me at eight o’clock. Mind you sleep well. Good night, little one,” and he stooped and kissed her cheek.

The colour mounted to the child’s face, and she shrank back a little.

“Don’t be afraid of me, dear,” said Guy kindly. “That is how we always say good night to our little sisters in England ;” and Dolores went away smiling, and saying to

herself, "He will let me stay now."

Guy went out again into the streets, feeling vexed and unsettled, hardly knowing what to do with himself, and dreading horribly the scene that must inevitably come in the morning. He did not want to see the Vivians, nor Mrs. Scarlett, nor his brother. They were so different, the two men—most of all in their codes of honour. Guy knew perfectly well that, if he told Captain Charteris the truth, his only answer would be a shrug, or an incredulous smile; if Adrian believed him, he would consider him a fool; and so Guy preferred to avoid a meeting.

In the morning, when he went in to breakfast, Dolores was already there, looking out of the window. She came forward eagerly, and put up her face to him, since that was the English custom, and he kissed her gravely and kindly.

“Have you slept well?” he asked her.

No, she had not slept much, but she was so happy at being in Paris, the hours had not seemed long. Then they drew up to the table, and she poured out coffee for him, as she had done the night before, and felt as if a kind of paradise had opened upon her.

“It is you who do not eat this morning,” she said playfully. “See how hungry I am, and how I have eaten more than my share of all the good things.”

As for Guy, he could not swallow a morsel; he felt as if it would choke him. When Dolores had finished, he looked at his watch.

“Will you go and put on your hat?” he said, getting up suddenly, with a painful feeling of embarrassment; it must come now, and he had the true Englishman’s horror of a scene.

The child's colour came and went, and she trembled.

"Where are you going to take me?" she asked.

"I can't deceive you," he said, going up to her and taking both her hands in his; "I must take you home. I have sent word to Marcelline that you shall be safe with her to-day." And then Dolores broke into a passion of tears and sobs, every one of which went straight to Guy's heart. He felt as if he were some cruel monster, who had wittingly robbed this poor little lamb of her peace and happiness, and broken her heart. "What shall I do?" he groaned to himself, and he tried to take her in his arms as he would have done a little sorrowful child. But she tore herself from him, and gasped out bitter, incoherent words, hardly intelligible through her sobs.

“ I will not go back—I will die ! I will never see Marcelline or Mamma again. Send me out in the streets to die ! I care not ; you are so cruel, whom I believed so good and kind ! It is nothing to you. Let me go away and die ! ”

Guy was beside himself ; he called her by all the most endearing names ; he took her in his arms, and laid her head upon his breast, while his own eyes were wet with unshed tears for very pity of the big drops that rained down the pale, piteous face. Had it not been for the thought of his promise to Marcelline, he would almost have resolved to keep her with him altogether. He waited with the patience of a woman until the fitful sobs began to die away, only now and then stroking the brown hair, and uttering some soothing word ; and when the panting chest began to heave less painfully, and the great drops came

slower, he said to her, "Let me talk to you, little one, and try to listen to me reasonably and calmly, like a woman."

And Dolores said humbly,

"Continue, Monsieur. I will listen."

"If I thought it would be for our happiness, dear, to be always together—if I felt or believed I could always love you, and never weary of you, or you of me, I would make you my wife at once."

"I never thought of that," interrupted Dolores, with a stifled sob.

"But, my dear child, you do not understand these things. All your simple, innocent life you have lived upon that hill over Rouen; you have never seen the world, or heard of its ways; you don't even know what constitutes sin and wickedness. If I took advantage of your innocence and ignorance, I should be 'a blackguard.'"

“Oh, no!” cried Dolores, shaking her head. “You could never do anything wrong or wicked.”

Guy was half beside himself.

“If you stayed with me, Dolores, and I did not marry you, the world would despise and scorn you, and would call me a dishonourable villain.”

“Why should they scorn me?—the bad, cruel world!”

“You cannot argue with me, child—you do not understand, and I cannot explain to you; indeed, you must trust me, and believe that what I say is for your good.”

“You are very cruel!” cried Dolores, amid fresh sobs. “You do not care if my heart breaks, or if I die!” And then she fell on her knees, and put up two little hands like a child praying, and said piteously through her tears, “Have pity on me!”

After all, Guy was flesh and blood, not a stock or stone, insensible to passion or beauty, or anything else that men are touched by. He felt the blood rushing to his brain, and a strong desire possessing him to sacrifice right, honour, conscience—everything for the sake of the kneeling figure before him. For one moment he forgot Milly—forgot honour—forgot all but the beautiful-eyed, pleading child, who loved him so dearly, so utterly; and he snatched her in his arms and kissed her a thousand times. Then, overcome by a sudden horror of remorse, he fled from the room.

“She *shall* go—she *must* go!” he cried to himself, pacing up and down his room in a perfect fever. “What can I say to her? Marcelline will be waiting in an agony. I have given my word, and how, in heaven’s name, can I break it, without

being the greatest blackguard on the face of the earth?"

Then he caught sight of a great cloak and veil he had sent for to disguise Dolores on her journey; he threw them over his arm and went back to the room.

"Child," he said, forcing his voice into harshness, "you must put on this cloak and veil and come with me at once. The train leaves in half an hour."

The girl rose from the sofa and stood before him, proud and defiant.

"Good-bye, Monsieur. Since you send me away, I go, but I will never return home. Why should I? The Seine runs quite near; and then—then I shall never trouble anyone any more." But the voice that tried so hard to be firm failed utterly.

"Don't talk like that, little one," Guy said, very tenderly. "You make me cruel. Some day you will know that by parting

from you I gave you the strongest proof of my love."

"If you loved me, you would not part from me."

"Very well, then," said Guy, in desperation, "say I do not love you. Would you force me to pass all my life with a woman I did not love?"

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur," cried the poor child, stung to the very quick. "I did not believe you hated me. I see now how poor and disgraced I must seem in your eyes. Let me go! I will never trouble you any more!" And, blind with pain and shameful tears, she tried to force her way past him to the street.

"Dolores, before you leave me, tell me one thing," said Guy, detaining her by force. "Are you just? Have I ever wronged or been cruel to you? Have I tried to make you love me with soft words or false promises?"

“No, Monsieur, it was my own foolishness,” she answered, bitterly.

“I do love you, dear child—love you very dearly. I will always be your friend as long as I live—will shield you from harm, from sorrow or danger, as much as lies in my power. If ever you want me I will come to you at once.”

“If,” said Dolores, wistfully, looking up at his kind, earnest face through a mist of tears—“if I go back home with you now, will you promise they shall not be angry or cruel with me?”

“I promise, on my sacred word of honour, if anyone is cruel to you, to take you away, and place you amongst those who will be kind to you.”

“And will you come and see me sometimes—just once now and then—that I may not die of the misery of thinking I shall never see you again?”

“I promise that too. And now, little

one, wrap yourself up in these things, and we will go together."

"Monsieur, I weary you ; but may I ask one little thing more of you ?"

"Anything in the world that is possible, my child."

"Will you stay in Rouen all to-morrow, and not go away until Monday ?"

Guy paused a moment, and then promised. Half an hour later they were in the train, on their way to Rouen. Dolores scarcely spoke a word. She only answered, "Yes, Monsieur," "No, Monsieur," when her companion addressed her ; but when he closed his eyes, or turned away to the window, she watched him furtively, with eyes brimfull of tears. She was saying to herself,

"If only this miserable journey would last for ever, that I might at least see his face, or hear his kind voice !"

“See, there is a handsome château!” or, “That is quite an English bit of scenery,” Guy would say; and she answered, “Yes, Monsieur;” but she was not thinking of what he said, only of him.

And then at last the train arrived at Rouen, and he wrapped the cloak and veil tenderly round her, so that no one might by chance recognise her face or figure. As they stopped he saw Marcelline’s face gazing up from the platform, not comely and cheerful, as was its wont, but eager, haggard, worn. Guy stepped out quickly, and whispered :

“Do not seem to notice her. I will take her up in a carriage to the house; you must follow on foot.”

“Do not drive up to the gate,” she returned, in a hurried whisper; and then she disappeared.

Guy lifted Dolores out, and put her

into one of the station cabs, getting in after her.

“Drive to the church of St. Ouen,” he said to the man.

The poor child leaned back against the dusty blue cushions in silence as the shaky conveyance rattled and jumbled past the scenes which she seemed to have left ages ago, instead of only the day before. They passed the barracks, and along the quay, and then turned up the Rue Grand Pont, and the Rue des Carmes. There were no eager glances at the gay shops now. What cared Dolores for the *bijouterie* or pictures? the bright nick-nacks or the admiring glances of the slim-waisted young officers?

At the door of St. Ouen they stopped, and Guy helped out the cloaked and veiled figure.

“Go in,” he whispered, “and I will wait for Marcelline.”

“I shall see you again?” she cried, feverishly.

“Yes, dear; I am only going to wait outside. I will explain everything to Marcelline, and she shall not utter one word of reproach to you.” And then Dolores went in, and the door closed between her and all she loved or valued in life.

It seemed to her as if she were going into her grave, the vast vaulted aisle struck her so chill and cold, and each footstep echoed dismally. She sat down on one of the rush-bottomed chairs, and laid her face against the back of another, and the tears came raining again from her weary eyes, and there was a numb, chill pain at her heart. What, to her, was bright colouring, or rose windows, or beautifully decked shrines now! She only knew and thought that there was one supreme happiness in life—that was love; one intense, heart-

breaking misery—that was love ; one thing to desire—that was death. She did not know into what sweet lines that bitter, aching thought had been woven by a great poet. Why should saddest themes make sweetest music ?

“ Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain,
And sweet is death, who puts an end to pain ;
I know not which is sweeter—no, not I.

“ Love, art thou sweet ?—then bitter death must be ;
Love, thou art bitter ; sweet is death to me—
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.”

Poor little, impatient, sorrowful heart !
But sorrow comes so hard to the young.

Meantime, Guy was pacing up and down the Place outside, waiting for Marcelline, and looking in a desultory way at the statue of Napoleon and the Lantern Tower. Presently she appeared, toiling and out of breath, and he hastened forward to meet her.

“ Oh ! Monsieur, *mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !*

what a terrible affair ! What is to be done ?" she cried, holding up her hands.

"Come inside the doorway, where we shall not be disturbed," said Guy. "Now tell me—is anything known ?"

"Non, non, Monsieur. Grâce à Dieu, rien, rien, rien du tout !"

"Thank God ! Have you seen my servant ?"

"Yes, Monsieur. Ah ! you are an angel of goodness !" and, to the young man's confusion, she seized his hand and kissed it.

"Tell me, Marcelline, what did you do when you returned and found the poor child gone ?"

"Ah ! Monsieur, I was like one mad. I asked Jeanneton where was Mademoiselle, and she had not seen her, and came about curiously, questioning me ; but I said it was nothing, though my heart failed

me. I had told Mademoiselle to come and meet me, and we had missed on the road. Then I sent Jeanneton home, that I might not betray myself; and this morning, when she came and asked me where I found Mademoiselle, I told her she had been in the church, and that now she was in her own room, tired, and sleeping late. But last night, when Jeanneton was gone, I hastened and searched for the child's clothes; and when I found her best things missing, and the money gone from my work-box, a great despair filled me, and I said to myself, 'She is gone to seek him.' Then I locked the house, and ran down to the Gare, and asked when a train had gone for Paris, and they told me nearly two hours since. I went to the Bureau, and asked the gentleman who looks through a little window if he had seen a young lady, quite young, and all alone, with a grey

dress and hat, and he said yes, he remembered such a one—he believed she had gone to Amiens, but there had been a dark gentleman speaking to her. Then there came another official, and he said, ‘No, the little fair demoiselle was gone to Paris,’ but the first still said Amiens. Then, Monsieur, my heart sank within me. I knew not how to act. The demoiselle might not have been my child, after all; if I went away, and locked up the house, the neighbours would break open the door, and everything be discovered; if I went to Paris, how in all the great city should I find the little one? I despaired—I wrung my hands—I was distracted. When I thought of the child alone in Paris, knowing nothing, knowing no one, I almost resolved to throw myself into the Seine. For a moment a doubt of you, Monsieur, came to me—the Holy Virgin pardon me

that I should ever have suspected anyone so good, so noble, so generous ! but the hearts of men are evil, and the little one is beautiful. But what could I do ? Then I said I will wait until to-morrow—it may be she will return. I went home—all was dark and desolate ; she was not there. I went into the church, and I prayed to the Holy Virgin to help me—ah ! Monsieur, as I had never prayed in my life before ; and I vowed to her every sou of the money you had given me in candles for the little one's safe return. Ah, the accursed gold ! It seemed to me as the thirty pieces for which Judas sold the Blessed Saviour. Then I went back to the house, and wandered to and fro, listening to every sound, thinking it might be the little one come back, and going every hour to the gate ; and very early this morning came your letter, and I well-nigh went mad for joy and for happi-

ness to think I had betrayed my horror to no one. Ah ! Monsieur, tell me, I pray, how it was that you found the child in the great city, where she must have been lost a thousand times but for the mercy of the Blessed Virgin !”

CHAPTER X.

BON SECOURS.

AND Guy told her what we already know.

“Now,” he said, “promise me never to utter a harsh word or a reproach to the poor child on the subject.”

“I, Monsieur? *Mon Dieu!* I make reproaches to the little innocent! Do you take me for a barbarous one?”

“On the contrary, I believe you to be all that is kind and tender. We will go to her now, and this afternoon I am coming up to see her. To-morrow, also, I have promised to remain in Rouen.”

Marcelline looked at him for a moment doubtfully, but she had not courage to oppose, even by a word, this man whom she looked upon as a marvel of nobleness and generosity. Then they went up the aisle together, and found Dolores, with her face still buried in her hands.

“*Pauvre chou !*” murmured Marcelline, her eyes filling with tears as she laid a kind hand on the child’s shoulder. Then she took her gently by the arm saying, “Come home with me, my lamb.”

Guy stooped down and whispered,

“Go with her, dear. I will come and see you at four this afternoon.”

Then Dolores took heart, and drying her tears, went away up the hill with Marcelline; and Guy stayed behind in the great church, feeling sore grieved and perplexed.

“Would to God I had never followed

her in here the first time!" he said to himself. "If I could only undo what I have unwittingly done, what would I not give!" It tortured him horribly to think of the tear-stained face and sobbing mouth; he who would not willingly have given pain to anyone or anything on earth. "She is only a child," he tried to comfort himself by saying; "she will soon forget." But he knew that in the nature of things it could not be yet awhile. A young beauty in the world of fashion may soon lose the heartache in a whirl of continual excitement, but this poor child, with no resources or amusements, leading a dull, monotonous life in this old town—what had she to do but nurse and foster her sorrow, until it grew into a burden too heavy for her poor, frail nature to bear?

As he stood leaning against the great column, he asked himself seriously whether

he was not in honour bound to marry the girl whom he had wronged, however unintentionally. She was a dear lovable thing. Then he remembered the misery he had seen amongst his friends from incongruous marriages, and how bitterly some of them had repented, and he felt it was impossible.

Presently he left the church, and wandered down among the old streets that had interested him so much only a week ago; the curious old market-place, the Rue des Arpents, the Rue Malpalue. Then, bethinking himself of his servant, he went down to the quay. Stevens was standing at the door talking to the landlord.

"There is a room disengaged on the first floor, Sir Guy, if you like to have it," the discreet valet said, touching his hat.

"Very well," Guy answered, "I shall probably stay until Monday morning, but you can go back to Paris. Tell Captain

Charteris he may expect me on Monday, but that I shall write."

In the afternoon, even before four o'clock, Guy was standing at the gate of the white house on the hill. Dolores was not there waiting for him as she used to wait, straining eager eyes and welcoming him with glad smiles a long way off; Marcelline was there instead.

"How is she?" the young man asked in a low voice.

"She has poured out tears in torrents, has spoken little, and I have hardly persuaded her to taste a mouthful of food."

"Poor little soul!" said Guy, filled with compassion. "Be good to her," and he would have placed five Napoleons in Marcelline's hand, but she started back as if something had stung her.

"No, no, no, Monsieur! a thousand times no! I will never take anyone's gold

again that I have not earned, and I need no bribe to be kind to the poor little one."

"I am sure you don't," said Guy heartily; "I did not think of that;" and then he followed her up the garden into the house. Dolores was lying crouched up in a corner of the sofa when he entered; her eyes were closed. She did not even move when he came up to her.

Marcelline closed the door behind him, and went away sorrowfully to the kitchen, saying to herself,

"Ah, if only the little one had a big *dot*, this brave milor might marry her, and all the trouble be saved. But for him she must have hundreds of thousands of francs at least. Ah, how one would be well in the world if everyone were rich just as he wanted it!" Then she brisked about, and scolded Jeanneton, who did not mind very much, since she was deaf.

“Who was the fine gentleman following you up the garden?” the old woman asked, presently turning from the wooden dresser where she was peeling an onion, and looking curiously at Marcelline.

For a moment the latter was tempted to wish that poor Jeanneton was blind as well as deaf.

“Fine gentleman indeed!” she answered scornfully, clattering the plates together. “Since when have you had such an eye for a fine man?”

“Il était beau cependant, ce Monsieur,” said Jeanneton, sagaciously.

“Well, then, it was the English Curé’s brother, come to give a little spiritual advice to Mademoiselle.”

“He is not like the Curé I have seen, then,” returned Jeanneton,—“a poor little pale, meagre man. And the English priests are allowed to marry; it cannot be well, then,

for them to come and give spiritual advice to pretty little ones like our demoiselle."

"Bah!" said Marcelline defiantly, "you know nothing about it."

"Ah, ah!" retorted Jeanneton, with a grin that showed a painful deficiency of front teeth, "handsome young men and girls are much the same everywhere, English or French. And the English are a fine race. I always liked a big man myself."

"Pouf!" snorted Marcelline, contemptuously.

"Ah! I wasn't always like what I am now, I can tell you," said old Jeanneton, piqued; "once there wasn't a grisette in all the Quartier Latin with brighter eyes or a neater ankle."

"Bah!" sneered Marcelline, "all old women have been pretty in their youth, if one believed them."

“You may believe or not, it is nothing to me,” retorted Jeanneton, fiercely. “You think because you are fat, and have a double chin, that a man would have no eyes for a small slight figure.”

Marcelline gave a little short laugh.

“Ah, *ma pauvre fille*, we need not trouble ourselves to quarrel about what we have been, since I don’t suppose any man would care much about either of us now.” And with that practical remark, the worthy soul betook herself into the garden to gather herbs.

Dolores lay upon the sofa, looking so white and still, saying never a word in answer to Guy’s little kind embarrassed sentences. Now and then she heaved a sigh that seemed to come from the bottom of her heart. It was infectious—he answered it by another. After half an hour of this sort of thing, he feels he can’t stand it any

longer. "If it weren't for that other one," he thinks ruefully, "hang me if I wouldn't send for the parson and marry her at once. I believe she'll die, and then I shall have been her murderer." He gets up abruptly, and goes towards the door.

"Don't leave me—oh ! don't leave me !" she gasps.

"No, no, dear, I am coming back," and he closes the door softly and goes out to Marcelline, who is on her knees in the kitchen garden plucking herbs.

"This is the very devil," he says, addressing her in his own vernacular, quite oblivious in his perplexity that she doesn't understand him. Guy, being unable to translate his sentence, pauses for a moment.

"Pardon, Monsieur ?" responds Marcelline, picking herself up with some difficulty. "Is she getting reasonable ?" Marcelline

asks, pointing over her shoulder to the windows of the drawing-room.

Guy shakes his head.

"We can't go on like this," he says ; "we must do something to distract her mind."

"Mais, mon Dieu, comment ?" inquires Marcelline, with a gesture expressive of profound despair.

"I've promised to spend to-morrow here," pursues Guy ; "but it is too dreadful to think of in this state of things. Look here, Marcelline," as an idea strikes him, "couldn't I have a carriage and take her out for the day ?"

"Impossible."

"Not impossible if you went too. You told me once her mother never speaks to anyone here, and as for other people, you're clever enough to make it all right."

"*Voyons !*" reflects Marcelline, "to-morrow is Sunday, everyone is abroad."

Everyone but the English parson, who

you say is the only person Mrs. Power ever speaks to. Now if I were to have a carriage and take you both a little excursion, say to Bon Secours, it might distract her thoughts and do her good; and I tell you frankly, I can't come up here with the prospect of another such day as to-day."

Marcelline ruminates. "Madame returns on Thursday—Thursday, and to-day is Saturday. Something must be done with the child, or her white face will tell everything. One must risk a little, and if the neighbours are inquisitive—well, I shall satisfy them," she said with a sagacious and self-approving nod.

So it is arranged, and Guy goes back a shade more cheerful to the little drawing-room.

"Come, dear, cheer up," he says, taking Dolores' hand. "Marcelline and I have been concocting a little plan for to-morrow."

The wet grey eyes look sadly at him, but she is silent.

“Well, have you none of the curiosity of your sex?” he adds, with an attempt at gaiety.

A little grievous shake of the head answers him.

“Well, then, I suppose I must tell you. You, and I, and Marcelline are going to have a carriage and drive to Bon Secours—we will dine and spend the day there. Come, now, won’t that be a pleasant change?”

A little gleam comes into the pale face. “Yes,” says the poor broken voice.

He sits a little time longer with her, and she brightens up at last. It is such a great thing for a child, or indeed for any of us, to have something to look forward to.

And by the next morning, when he comes to fetch her and Marcelline, and take them to the carriage that waits half-way up the hill, she is almost her old self again.

She feels almost happy, sitting by Sir Guy's side in the lumbering fly, with its pair of veteran brown horses—to her simple notion it seems quite grand. And oh ! how kind he is to her, stopping at the confectioner's to buy her all manner of cakes and sweetmeats (though she has not much heart to eat them now), and pointing out everything of interest on the road. Marcelline, sitting opposite in her grand white cap and gloves, is the perfection of a discreet duenna. She seems to see and hear nothing.

How deeply that drive is engraven on the child's mind long, long after ! The bright, hot sun shining on the water, the view from the quay of the bright green islands down the Seine, the tall poplars and the airy railway-bridge. She remembers the great rocks by the roadside full of holes, in and out of which black birds kept flying ; the

blind, halt, and maimed who sat by the wayside clamouring for alms, to whom compassionate Guy threw sous and small silver coins, and sometimes large ones. The good-looking young *douanier* at the Barrière too, who asked if they had anything to declare ; and the unfinished Château half-way up the hill, which the builder had not lived to inhabit, but which was falling into ruin, while his heirs quarrelled and went to law over it.

Then they come to Notre Dame de Bon Secours, where they alight.

“While you are saying your prayers,” says Sir Guy to Marcelline, “we two will walk round the church, and afterwards you will find us in the cemetery.”

Marcelline curtsies, and goes through the little side aisle to the beautiful altar of the Virgin. She says very long prayers—more than three times the wonted length of her orisons ; for has not the Holy Virgin

heard her prayers, and rescued the little innocent from the devouring jaws of the Evil One? And who knows, thought the honest woman, but that the brave Englishman may compassionate the little one, and make a grand milady of her, even though she has no *dot*. One had said to her that it was not always in England as in France a matter of *convenance* and arrangement, but that love and beauty were thought more of than even rank and fortune.

Meantime Sir Guy and Dolores are walking round the beautiful church.

Beautiful it is, with its pillars in scrolls of rich red and blue, green and gold—its many windows splendid with all the colours of the prism, like a Moorish palace—its arches covered with fair pictured angels bearing scrolls and garlands—its altar-piece of gold, standing in a chancel paved with the most exquisite mosaics.

“Come here,” says Guy, drawing her to the right side of the church, and showing her the hundreds of white marble tablets set in the wall, and inscribed with the thanks and prayers of many a mother, husband, wife, for the recovery of dear ones. “I prayed to Mary, and she heard me.” So they all ran.

Then, going out, they descend to the cemetery, and stand looking down upon the scene below. The broad white road curves and winds up the green hill, the yellow Seine glitters in the sunlight; to the right lies the busy town, with its churches, its manufactories, its tall chimneys. In the midst of the river, opposite the town, stands a big island, covered with houses and little green gardens running down to its banks. The keen, fresh air blows in their faces; there is a distant hum of stirring life from below—in the silence they

can even hear the dogs barking and the cocks crowing; and there at their feet lie the tranquil dead, sleeping their long sleep in the narrow graves which loving hands have strewn with flowers and immortelles.

Priez pour eux !

“Are you tired, my child?” asks the young man tenderly, seeing a weary, wistful look come into the girl’s eyes. “What are you thinking of?”

“I am thinking I should like to die here to-day, while I am happy, and you are still with me.”

“You don’t know what you say, my little one,” he answers her kindly, taking her hand in his—“you, with all your life before you; and please God many bright days in store.”

“I shall never be happy any more;” and big tears rise in the blue eyes and roll down on the grass like diamonds.

Guy looks at her, feeling so grieved, and yet so utterly impotent to comfort her.

"Oh, child!" he cries presently, "if you only knew how you pain me! I feel as though you were a poor little weak, defenceless lamb that I had maimed and tortured."

Dolores dries her eyes and looks up.

"No, no, no!" she says quickly; "it is only my foolishness. You have been very, very good, and I am ungrateful. See, here comes Marcelline. Before she reaches us, may I ask you something?"

"Yes, dear, anything."

"Will you come only up to the gate to-morrow morning, and bid me good-bye before you go?"

"I will."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

Then Marcelline came up, and they all

went and had dinner together, and returned home by another road. Guy walked up and down the quay, smoking, until a very late hour that night. He lighted one cigar after another, and puffed sometimes quickly and vigorously at it, and sometimes so gently and thoughtfully, you could hardly see the faint blue line curl from his lips. He was thinking of the strange things that had befallen him that week—a week that almost promised to be the most eventful one of his life. He could not forget Milly, he longed passionately to see her again, and yet he loved this poor, innocent, sorrowful child, who clung to him with a strange, wild worship. And all that day she had been so sweet, so soft and tender, there had been no touch of waywardness in her. She seemed the dearest, most lovable thing in the world. “What some men would give to have a dear, loving little crea-

ture like that to pet and fondle!" he said to himself; "but somehow I feel differently about these things. I'm not a clever fellow myself, and a woman to win and keep my real love must be something I could admire and be proud of; not a woman full of head-knowledge, and ready to overpower you with it on every occasion, but a dear, soft, feminine thing, full of bright intelligence and ready wit, who would show her beautiful soul in her eyes, and make you feel all the better and nobler for her influence. I should like to have had a little sister like Dolores. How fond I should have been of her! If she had done the most foolish things in the world, I should have forgiven her, rather than see the tears in her blue eyes, or the poor little mouth quiver, that was only made to laugh and kiss. It makes my heart bleed when I think of her sad and sorrowful. It reminds

me of the poor little wounded kitten I once saved from Adrian's dog. Will she remember me long after I am gone, I wonder? Will she go about with a wan face and an aching heart? My God! if I thought she would, my poor little darling, I never could be such a brute as to leave her."

And then Guy threw away the end of his cigar, and went into the hotel. The next morning, faithful to his promise, he went up to the Barrière to bid Dolores good-bye. There she stood, looking for him, her face so wan and wistful; but when he approached, the colour flushed up in her cheeks, so that he could not see its real expression. She comes near to him, and puts one trembling hand on his, looking up in his face with eyes dimmed by tears.

"Monsieur, I must say one little word to you before you go."

“Say on, dear child,” and he would have kissed her hand, but she draws it away quickly.

“I did not think,” she falters, her colour coming and going—“I did not know—I would say I did not consider that in going after you to Paris I was doing something—something that was shameful, and would lose me your esteem. Perhaps I was mad, but then only one thought filled me—to see you once more, to be with you, and my great pain of losing you made me forget all else.”

She has never seemed so dear, so lovable in Guy's eyes as at this moment, when she stands before him ashamed, embarrassed, uttering her piteous words painfully and brokenly. He leans against the high grass bank under the elms, and draws her towards him, until her head lies on his breast. Then he says—

“My child, I never in my life had any but the tenderest, kindest thoughts of you. Your innocent love would be the dearest thing in all the world to me, if I only felt I could make it the return it deserves.”

“I want no return,” she answers, quickly. “I only want to tell you what I feel. I never seemed to see how wrong and foolish I had been until last night, when I lay awake all the long hours. Then it came to me all at once with a great horror, and I blushed for shame, even in the darkness, to think how I must have seemed in your eyes.”

“You never seemed anything to me, darling, but what was dear, and good, and honest,” says Guy, stooping and kissing her tenderly. “I shall never have any thought of you except to blame myself. And remember, dear, if you are in any trouble or sorrow, write to me at once,

and wherever I am, whatever I may be doing, I will come to you."

Dolores looks up at him eagerly.

"Will you," she falters—"will you write to me just once or twice when you are in England, before you have quite forgotten me?"

"I shall never forget you, my child; but I will send you a letter sometimes, if you wish it."

"And some day, when you are in Paris, in the gay world, will you remember poor Dolores, and come out here to see her?"

"Yes, dear, that I will. And now I must go; there is no more time to spare."

The poor child holds his hand quite tight for a moment, as though she cannot bear to let him go; then she says, sobbing,

"Adieu, Monsieur—adieu!"

Guy feels as if he should cry himself if he stayed any longer. He draws her close

to him and kisses her tenderly, without speaking a word; then he tears himself away, and hurries down the hill without once looking back.

He felt utterly miserable during the journey back to Paris. He did not even think of Milly, or that he was going to see her; it would have seemed too cruel to indulge one pleasant thought while this poor child was breaking her heart about him.

CHAPTER XI.

GUY'S TURN.

IT was about one o'clock when Guy entered his rooms in Paris. Some letters were lying on the table—a note from Adrian on the top.

“MY DEAR GUY—In case you return before I get back, I leave a line to tell you that we're all off to Versailles for the day—we being the Vivians, Mrs. Scarlett, and myself. What an awfully jolly little woman she is! I'm tremendously obliged to you for putting me in the way of such a good thing, and shall be more so still if it comes to anything. I shouldn't wonder. I like

her amazingly, and she seems to reciprocate. I've made the most of my time; we've been together the whole of the last three days. By the way, I've smoked all your cigars, but I have left an address with Stevens, where Fox tells me you can get rattling good ones, but be sure to mention his name. We are going—a nice little *parti carré*—to the theatre to-night. Crichton kindly takes Mrs. Vivian off, and I look after the charming widow. Old Vivian tells me she has £3,000 a-year, *which she doesn't lose*—too good a chance to let slip, though I hate the thought of marrying like the devil.

“Your affectionate brother,

“ADRIAN CHARTERIS.

“P.S.—Vivian wants you to dine and go to Mabile with him. Mrs. Scarlett, it seems, saw you sitting with your mysteri-

ous little visitor drinking coffee on Friday night."

As Guy read the letter the colour gradually flushed into his face—a sickening sensation came over him—the room seemed to reel. Stevens came in hurriedly at this moment.

"Beg pardon, Sir Guy; I didn't expect you quite so soon. Shall I order some lunch, Sir Guy? The Captain's gone out. He left a letter, and I was to be sure and give you this card with the cigar-merchant's address."

"All right," said Guy, collecting himself with an effort. "I don't want anything at present; come back in an hour."

Stevens disappeared, and Guy sat down and looked out of the window. He saw nothing, felt nothing, at first; it was as if he had been stunned by a heavy blow.

"Poor little girl!" he said presently, half aloud. "It is awfully hard to care for some one who doesn't care for you."

He was thinking of Dolores. Then he roused himself.

"What a fool I am to be so upset!" he thought, angrily; "I daresay it's only his swagger. He's a good-looking fellow enough, but what the deuce should she see in him to marry? He does well enough to swell the train of her lovers, but, pshaw! marrying's a very different affair. I wish to heaven she lost every penny of her accursed money if she marries again! It's an awful temptation to fellows who are poor. Anyhow, I'll stop and see for myself how matters are."

Suffering makes us compassionate, and during that dreary afternoon Guy sent many a thought to Rouen, to the poor little girl whose wet blue eyes and trem-

bling lips were so deeply printed on his mind. He went to the jeweller's and bought the locket set with pearls that had taken his fancy some days before, fastened a gold chain to it, and sent it off with the kindest letter he could frame. He never got the blurred, tear-stained, touching little letter that thanked him for it. The child could not rightly remember the name of his hotel, but she sent it in hope that he would get it. There could not be two Sir Guy Wentworths in Paris.

When Guy returned to his room Stevens met him.

"Mr. Vivian's valet was here not ten minutes ago, Sir Guy, asking for you. I said you were out. Mr. Vivian wanted to see you in his room."

Guy turned back, and went to the Vivians' room. The door was ajar, and he pushed it open. Charles Vivian was not

there, but Milly Scarlett was, and alone.

"Come in, Sir Guy," she says, gaily. "I am commissioned to keep you until Mr. Vivian returns ; he won't be more than ten minutes."

The blood seems to rush from Guy's heart ; he hesitates, stammers something, and then walks straight up to Milly where she stands. He will never know how he came to act as he did ; the gravest actions of a man's life are often unpremeditated.

"Don't think me quite mad," he says, in a voice thick and hoarse with feeling,—for he does feel intensely at this moment ; feels at sight of this woman as if life or death hung upon her fiat. "You know nothing of me, you have seen nothing of me ; I am not in any way worthy of you, but I love you so madly that I cannot help speaking of it !"

Great beads stand on his forehead from

emotion. Milly, who has had many love-declarations, has never seen a man more in earnest than this. She is half frightened, and puts up her hand deprecatingly.

“If you refuse me ten thousand times over,” he says passionately, before she has time to speak, “I must tell you how I love you—I *must* ask you to try to care for me a little.”

“Hush!” she says, the scarlet blood rising to her temples, while her eyes look away from him. “Don’t you know?”

“Know what?” harshly.

“That I am going to marry your brother.”

He stands staring at her as if he had turned into stone. She feels dreadfully sorry for him. She would have given anything to avoid this scene. People have called her vain and heartless, but she is not vain and heartless enough to see a

man suffer for loving her, and be glad.

Milly puts her hand—that delicate white hand he longs for so keenly—into his. He shivers at the touch.

“I never dreamed of this,” she says, ever so sweetly. “How could I, after I saw you on Friday night with——”

She stops, confused.

Guy laughs a bitter, strident laugh.

“How indeed?” he says, harshly, wondering to himself why Fate should have played these pranks with him.

He feels the small hand in his; it burns him. He looks at Milly with strange eyes. A momentary madness seizes him. He takes her in his arms as in a vice, and holding her, kisses her once, twice, thrice.

Then she is alone, stupefied, frightened, half paralysed. A moment, and Charles Vivian comes in.

“Was that Guy Wentworth I saw rush-

ing out of this like a lunatic?" he asks.

"Yes; he was afraid of being late for dinner," she answers quietly, recovering herself in a second.

"Milly, how white you look! You are shaking like a leaf, I believe."

"I! My dear Charles, you have been smoking too much; you can't see distinctly. Feel," she says, putting her hand on his—"that is perfectly steady, is it not?"

"Perfectly. I suppose I was mistaken."

When Mr. Vivian inquires for Guy he is nowhere to be found. The consequence is, the *parti carré* is spoiled, for he does not see the fun of dining alone, and is utterly oblivious of the fact that he is not wanted.

"Rum thing Guy going off like that!" he remarks to his wife later when they are alone.

"I don't see anything particularly *rum* in it," she answers, pettishly; for has he not spoiled their pleasant little projected party of four, and made himself further obnoxious by his unpleasant remarks?

"Of course not," he remarks, with sarcasm. "If the house tumbled into the street, or anything equally unlikely took place, it wouldn't seem strange to you if I happened to think it was."

"I don't want to argue," she says, yawning. "Thank heaven it isn't necessary for *my* liver to be getting up a quarrel about nothing every half hour in the day."

"I suppose it's your charming placidity that puts so much superfluous flesh on you," retorts Charles Vivian, agreeably, knowing her *embonpoint* is a very sore subject with his wife. For a wonder she makes no reply.

"I believe," he says presently, resuming

the thread of his discourse—"I believe Guy proposed to Milly this afternoon, and I believe she'll marry that confounded young fool Adrian."

Mrs. Vivian laughs contemptuously.

"Your penetration is wonderful. Guy want to marry her, when he only saw her for a few hours, and then went straight off with another woman, or girl, or whatever she was!"

"Deuce take me if I understand about the girl!" says Charles Vivian reflectively. "A little thing with a baby face, Adrian says, not more than sixteen. Milly says so, doesn't she? And then Guy seeming so queer over it, and not telling me a word about her. He always used to confide in me about his affairs. However, just as I was coming along the passage, I saw him rushing out of the room like a maniac. I called to him, but he didn't stop, and

when I went in Milly was as white as a sheet."

"Nonsense! you must have fancied it; besides, he did not seem so particularly struck with her."

"Didn't he? My dear Gertrude, what a shocking bad memory you have! Don't you remember the night we dined at the Café Anglais, when you put on a new gown, and displayed more than usual of your charms for his benefit, it was all lost upon him? By Jove!" and Mr. Vivian laughs pleasantly, "he never saw anyone or anything but Milly."

"Really?" says his wife, reddening with anger. "I almost wonder you have not fallen a victim, since you seem to think Mrs. Scarlett such a siren."

"She's tremendously nice and clever; but love will never make a victim of me again," he replies, with a wry face. "You

may congratulate yourself upon having had one captive all to yourself, to torture and do with what seemeth good in your eyes."

"One," said his wife, with infinite contempt, "and what a one! I might have married half a dozen men, as you know well enough, and none of them could have made me half as miserable as you have done!"

"Quite true, I daresay; but you were practical, you know. I was by far the best match of the lot."

"Of course you were," she says, bitterly, "or I shouldn't have married you. What on earth was there in you to please any woman?—plain, awkward, ill-tempered, badly dressed as you were, except your miserable money! I was a pretty girl, I was admired, and you bought me."

Charles Vivian sticks his glass into his eye, and contemplates his wife lazily for a few moments.

"Hm!" he says thoughtfully. "I suppose you were once; but, by Jove, it requires the eye of faith to realise it now!"

"I detested and despised you then," she flames out passionately; "you know I refused you three times."

"I can only regret that you ever exerted your woman's privilege of changing your mind in my favour," he answers politely.

"I hate you!" she cries, bursting into tears.

"Mutual, I assure you. Don't spoil those lovely eyes. Good night. *Dormez bien, mon ange,*" and he retires to his dressing-room.

How they hate each other at that moment! What hate is so black or bitter as the hatred of man and wife, only fortunately in many cases it comes on in paroxysms, and is too violent to last.

CHAPTER XII.

LONDON IN SPRING.

ONE of those delicious Spring days just after Easter, when the season has scarcely begun, but nearly everyone is in town, and London is charming.

It is not surprising that strangers think our dear old city a dull, unsociable, dingy place, especially when they have just come from Paris—the gay, the bright, the beautiful; but I believe, to the genuine Londoner, it is the real *El Dorado* in the first blush of the dawning season, when he comes back to it from the country, or abroad, and meets everybody he knows between the top of

Bond Street and the middle of Pall Mall. They look so cheery and so glad to see you too, and the pretty women of your acquaintance are so much more pressing in their invitations than later on, when they are bored to death with the business of pleasure, and exhausted after so much hard labour in entertaining and being entertained. "Now you *must* come to tea, I have so much to tell you ; and have you seen So-and-So, and So-and-So, and did you hear ?—but I'll tell you all about it when you come. Now don't forget—I shall expect you. No.—, the old address. Good-bye," and Madame rolls away in her carriage, which she has actually stopped to speak to you ; and you pursue your way smiling, very well pleased with yourself and your neighbour, thinking what an awfully charming woman this is, what an awfully jolly place London is, and what an awful mistake it is to go abroad to

be amused, when everything's so much nicer and pleasanter in England. And the little dinners people give are so much jollier, because they are not duty dinners, but friendly and sociable; and you are asked to meet the people you like, and not dreadful, heavy old fogies, who have to be entertained because they have given a big feed to your host and hostess, or are going to do so, some time during the season. Your Club is just pleasant; there are enough fellows to make it cheery, without the horrid mob that fills it between the popular race meetings. The trees are throwing out tender green shoots; you've put on your blue frock-coat, with a *jardinière* in the button-hole, the first time this season; you've had your hair cut, and, on the whole, rather fancy yourself, as you stroll down St. James's Street, arm in arm with another fellow, laughing with un-

feigned enjoyment at the piquant little stories about everybody that you haven't heard because you've been away so long. And, after all, you're very well pleased with your own countrywomen, because they look fresh and lady-like, though they don't dress like Frenchwomen or Americans, and though, with a few exceptions, their boots *froissent* you inexpressibly.

In this pleasant position George Thornton finds himself on the afternoon of which I am about to write. He has been wintering abroad with his mother and sister, and in spite of the awful blow he thinks he got in being thrown over by Mrs. Scarlett, he manages to sustain life with equanimity, and to feel pretty jolly, though he gives vent to his spleen by the assumption of a certain cynicism of manner, and by railing at women, after the manner of a disappointed boy, whenever he can conveniently

bring up the subject. He has plenty of opportunity ; he and his compeers divide their conversation very equally between horses and women.

As they turn the corner by Sams' his friend suddenly disengages his arm, and in a moment is leaning half-way into the window of a brougham, into which he almost immediately jumps, and is conveyed away from young Thornton's eyes.

"Oh, hang the women !" he mutters, with a very glum visage. "Just in the middle of that story too ! And now, if I see Fitz, I shan't know whether to mention her to him or not. By Jove ! Brooke, is that you, old fellow ?"

This to another man, who has just come up, with a hearty shake of the hand.

"Why, Georgy, where have you been hiding all the Winter ?" says the newcomer, in a cheery voice, pleasant to hear

(by the way, what a gift a good voice is !).

“ Nobody seemed to know what had become of you, and I began to think the Jews had taken possession of your valuable person.”

“ Not so bad as that yet, old fellow. I think they'd have found me too expensive keep. I'm not at all sure my amusing conversation would have compensated them, and that's all they'd have got out of me. I've been wintering abroad for my health.”

“ The deuce you have ! Well, you look pretty fit, so I suppose your good intentions were crowned with success. I wrote you a line in December, and asked you to come down to the Court. I had some rattling good mounts for you, and the shooting was extra good this year ; but I concluded you were off somewhere, as I didn't hear from you.”

“ Thanks, old fellow ! I needn't tell you I never got the letter. I told that fool at

the Club to forward any private letters, but they always send the wrong ones. I got about forty circulars, and had to pay I don't know what for them; but they get the infernal thing up in such a way now, I defy you to tell by the outside what they are. And I'm so awfully afraid of looking in the ghastly pile of bills I know awaits me, that I haven't opened a single envelope yet."

"Bnt did you really go abroad because you were seedy, Georgy?"

"Yes, 'pon my word. I got a nasty kind of swimming in my head, nerves bad, always felt jumpy, you know, so I went and saw some fellow about it, and he sent me off to Nice, and advised me to keep pretty quiet. The doctor there is a very shrewd fellow; he asked me a heap of questions, knocked off the brandies and sodas, got me to bed in decent time, and in a couple of

months I was as fit as ever I was in my life."

"That's it!" says Colonel Brooke. "The going abroad's all humbug; if you'd followed out that prescription and stopped at home, the result would have been just the same."

"Of course it would, my dear boy, but I should like just to see anybody doing it in London, or anywhere else, as long as he stopped in England. I say, by Jove, Brooke, why *do* Englishwomen wear such awfully bad boots?"

"Don't know, I'm sure. I never thought about it. I suppose they don't go to the right people. But tell me all about Nice—what sort of a place is it?"

"Oh, very jolly for a little while. Not much to do if you don't gamble and dance, and I didn't do the former, because, thank Heaven, it doesn't amuse me, and I couldn't

do much in the dancing line on account of my head."

"I wonder the green cloth never tempted you, Georgy. You're not altogether so averse to the excitement of betting, unless you're very much changed from what you were when I saw you."

"Oh, I don't mind losing my money in a gentlemanlike way on a horse, but I hate the other thing. Always did. I don't know why. Of course it's all right for those who like it, only it doesn't amuse me. The worst part of it is, seeing the women. By Jove, when I was there, there were two or three awfully pretty, well-bred women; and to see their keen, eager faces and their quivering lips, to see them sitting side by side with the most degraded of both sexes, made my blood boil. I think if ever I saw a woman play I cared about, I should strangle her."

“I never heard you so down upon anything before, Georgy !” laughed his friend.

“Well, you know, it seems such profanation. There’s Monaco, one of the loveliest spots on God’s earth ; you stand on the terrace outside the Casino, and look down at the sea as blue as—blue as—blue as——”

“A sapphire,” suggests Colonel Brooke.

“Yes, blue as a sapphire, without any humbug. And the mountains all round are red and purple in the sun, just for all the world as the Scotch heather looks ; and it’s the most calm, peaceful gem of a bit of scenery you can imagine. And then to turn from that, and go back into the gaudily painted rooms, and see all the fevered, restless faces, and breathe the stifling odour—faugh ! it’s like going from heaven to hell !”

“By Jove ! what a tirade ! Well, as you are getting so moral, as you wouldn’t play,

and you couldn't dance, how on earth did you get through the time? Any pretty women there?"

"Oh, confound women! I'm sick of them." But his face belies him, for at this moment he flushes scarlet as the neatest of Victorias pulls up in front of him, and Milly Scarlett's eyes beckon him.

"The two very people I wanted to see," she says, shaking hands with them both. "We were just speaking of Colonel Brooke, weren't we, Laura;" turning to the very pretty golden-haired woman beside her.

"Yes—how d'ye do, Colonel Brooke—how d'ye do, Georgy?"—Everybody calls him Georgy.

"We must have a chat with you both, and we can't talk here; but we are going straight home—won't you both come and have tea with us?"

The two men acquiesce. Mr. Thornton

feels as if he ought to stand on his dignity, and never go near Milly again ; but somehow, when her eyes are upon him, he seems bewitched, and gives a glad assent, instead of the frigid refusal he had contemplated.

“Somebody told me Mrs. Scarlett was going to marry Charteris,” says Colonel Brooke, as the Victoria drives off. “I should hardly think it can be true.”

“They say so,” answers young Thornton stiffly. “I don’t know what she sees in him—a fellow with no brains, and a head like a barber’s block. What a confounded clatter there is in the street!” he continues irritably, for he does not relish the subject. “Why on earth can’t they make the roads here as they are in Paris. I always feel the most utter contempt for London when I come back from there.”

“I don’t think London is such a bad place after all,” laughs the other. “I know

I'm always precious glad to get back to it, after I've been away a couple of months."

"Oh, London's well enough, as far as the people go, and one's clubs and comfort and that sort of thing, but it's a very seedy place to look at. I don't wonder at foreigners hating it after their bright, cheery towns. Why, just look at our narrow streets, with the dwarfed houses all at sixes and sevens, built in every various style of inelegant architecture known!"

"My good fellow, that's the beauty of our British independence. An Englishman's house is his castle."

"It may be," retorts the other, "but I wish to goodness he wasn't allowed to offend everyone's eyes with it. As for Trafalgar Square, it's a downright blot on the nation. 'Pon my soul, I don't feel a bit more ashamed of Leicester Square. We want Haussman here for twelve months,

he'd make a clean sweep of those beastly little houses in the Strand, and open a view of the Houses of Parliament and St. James's Park."

For when Georgy Thornton spoke it was the day of the Empire, when Paris was the Queen of Cities, when there were gala days and feasts and shows, when her face was fair, beloved, and when the ashes of shame, and the sackcloth of misery, were not wrapped round her as a garment—but, instead, laughter and power and wanton mirth.

Five minutes later the two men are in the most graceful, most luxurious little drawing-room in all London. Milly and Mrs. Craven have arrived before them.

A delicate service of transparent china stands on the low table, with one or two bottles of quaint shape, whose contents hint of masculine proclivities; a little copper kettle sings merrily on a wood fire,

for the afternoon air is chilly ; and a collie, the handsomest of his race, lies watchful upon the fur rug.

Mrs. Craven has an infinite personal advantage over Milly Scarlett. She is indisputably a beauty. Golden-haired by the real rare gift of nature, blue-eyed, and with the figure of Dannecker's Ariadne. At first you might have said one had no chance against the other, but after you had been for some time in company with the two, you might feel inclined to turn from the fairer face, with its serene unchanging smile, to that other, all lights and shades, varying with every new emotion—gay, grave, pathetic, scornful, tender. To the first, ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have given the apple, the hundredth would have kept it for Milly ; and perchance when the ninety and nine had gone their way and forgotten, he, poor fellow,

would be haunted by a memory too deep to crush out.

Colonel Brooke lounges into the *dormeuse* beside Mrs. Craven; young Thornton stands with his back to the chimney-piece, and the talk is of theatres, operas, little scandals, and such things as men and women of the world do talk of over afternoon tea. Colonel Brooke and Mrs. Craven are not in the secret of Georgy's disappointment, and the latter innocently tells a touching story of the blighted affections of a certain young Guardsman, who loved a lady fair and false, and is supposed to have gone to the bad in consequence.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DISCUSSION.

“JUST like 'em!” breaks in Georgy, bitterly. “What *they* care, as long as they're amused ! I suppose it's a good thing to find them out in time. *I've* given up believing in them long ago. (The long ago in Georgy's reckoning of time is exactly a fortnight.)

“How absurd for a boy like you to talk in that way !” laughs Mrs. Craven.

“There isn't much of the boy left in one after four years in the service, Mrs. Craven,” says young Thornton, with a shade of pique ; the taunt don't go home.

“What a goose you are, Georgy ! as if I meant to taunt you.”

“No, but that’s such a favourite weapon of you charming women. You lead fellows on, or you play with them, or make catspaws of them, and then afterwards, if any mischief comes of it, or they’re indignant, or you’ve broken their hearts and sent them to the devil, it’s always ‘That boy ! who would have fancied his being so ridiculous ?—too absurd, you know !’ and the woman who has been crazing your brain with her soft looks and speeches turns round when it’s got as far as she chooses, and says with the most maternal air, ‘My dear boy, it’s too absurd. I’m old enough to be your mother.’ They don’t say that when it’s really true,” ends up Georgy, grimly, “only when they know they’re looking awfully young, and fresh and well.”

“*Apropos de quoi !*” utters Mrs. Craven

plaintively. "Did I ever encourage any boy, and then tell him I was old enough to be his mother?"

The tone is so helplessly pathetic, everyone laughs but Georgy, who is in earnest.

"Of course, if you insist on the discussion being personal," he retorts petulantly, "I have nothing more to say; I was only speaking about women generally, and am not aware of having broken through the rule that excepts 'present company.' Of course, I give in that you and Milly are angels, full of heart and all that sort of thing, as women *ought* to be; but I say again, and I stick to it, that women are not to be trusted, and are full of deceit, and cruelty, and vanity."

"You've made your discovery at least ten years too soon," says Colonel Brooke quietly.

"Men who live as hard as we do," re-

turns Thornton, with a touch of conscious pride that makes the other smile, "cut their wisdom teeth pretty early. There isn't much anyone could tell *us*."

"Oh, Colonel Brooke!" cries Mrs. Craven, "you don't think like this bad boy—you don't believe we're all so wicked and heartless."

"God forbid!" he answers quickly. "I believe there are some very good women in the world."

Mrs. Scarlett glances gently at him; she knows he might well be excused for having bitter thoughts of the sex. She knows, too, that he is far too thorough a gentleman to give utterance to any depreciatory opinion of them in their presence.

"Not '*in* the world,' you don't mean," says Georgy paraphrasing him, "out of the world somewhere, perhaps; down in the country beyond the reach of railways and

Paris fashions, and circulating libraries."

"And wicked, idle, *blasé* young Hussars and Guardsmen!" adds Mrs. Scarlett archly.

"But, upon my word, Georgy," puts in Mrs. Craven, "I can't think what has come to you, who used to be such a *preux chevalier*—unless, indeed, you're getting corrupted by that horrid Captain Brenton."

"I should just like you to hear him hold forth a little," says young Thornton grimly; "he wouldn't mind a bit. I've heard him tell women some very pretty things now and then; quite true, though. They were shut up, and couldn't say a word. Only the other day, at Lady G——'s he was on his favourite theme; there were four or five fashionable beauties there, and he told them the only men who knew how to treat women were Turks. Women were very well just to amuse men, but of course

they had no minds, no reasoning powers; were just fit to dance, to dress, to chatter, to intrigue; but there their capabilities ended."

"Did he really say that?" asks Mrs. Craven, opening her blue eyes.

"Yes, and they looked quite foolish."

"I suppose you had the story from him, eh, Georgy?" says Colonel Brooke looking up.

"Yes," he answers, a little defiantly. "Why?"

"Because I heard the end of it from some one else. Mrs. Basbleu was there, and she listened very quietly while we went on talking. "I've travelled all over the world," he said, in that insolent, affected tone that always makes one long to kick him. "I've bought my experience, and I know that a good or true woman is a thing never met with out of a novel."

"I daresay you have travelled a good deal, and bought a good deal of experience of our sex (rich men generally have)," says Mrs. Basbleu in her quiet way, "but you'll have to travel a little further, and buy a little more, to teach you that it's bad taste to talk to ladies as you've done to-day."

"Bravo, Gracie!" cries Mrs. Scarlett. "I'm delighted. That's what makes me so angry with women, to think they allow men to say all kinds of impertinences without taking them up. If a man has ten thousand a-year, like Captain Brenton, he may say and do anything. Wasn't he furious?"

"He couldn't say a word, and Lady G——, with her usual tact, changed the subject. But I heard him worse sat upon than that in Paris. He was giving his pet tirade at an afternoon tea of Mrs. Poyoby's—she used to get them up twice a week. When

he began I got up to go, because it didn't amuse me, and of course you can't go down a man's throat when ladies are present, as you would at your club, or in a smoking-room. It took me a minute or two to make my adieu, or I should have missed a great gratification. He was just saying he didn't believe there were ten virtuous women in Great Britain and Ireland. There was a little American present, very quick and impulsive, as most of them are, and she jumped up with blazing eyes. "I don't know who you are, sir, and I don't care, but I'll take the liberty to tell you that you are a liar and a coward, and I only wish I was a man to have the pleasure of kicking you down stairs!"

"I think I'll go," says Georgy at this juncture. He has been looking very savage the last five minutes.

"Why, dear?" asks Milly Scarlett.

“Because it doesn’t amuse me to hear my friends traduced behind their backs. I am *not* a woman.”

“And it doesn’t amuse us to be abused to our faces,” laughs Milly. “But come, sit down, and don’t be cross; we won’t say another word about your dear Pylades. But, you know, you brought him on the ground first. After all, what does it matter what people say behind our backs if they are civil to our faces.”

“A regular woman’s doctrine that,” retorts young Thornton.

“It seems to me,” Milly continues, “that men have forgotten all about the chivalrous old days; they have long ago laid down the swords they used to wield for us, and even taken up the pen against us.”

“Pshaw, Milly! quite wrong. Who writes all the bitter articles about women? Who puts one behind the scenes of your

trickeries and shams and falsehoods ? Where do we get all our knowledge of you, all our mistrust of you ? Where but from your own sex ? If one wants the newest scandal with its minutest details ; if one wants to make merry over a broken heart and a shattered reputation, where does one go ? Not to the club, *bien entendu*, but to the charming little boudoir of a woman of the world—not too young nor too particular ; and if you leave there with an unshaken belief in the goodness and faithfulness of women—why, you must be either a fool or a fanatic.”

“That sort of women are a disgrace to their sex,” cries Milly hotly. “Of course, if men are so blind and so easily duped, it’s hopeless to try to undeceive them. Who are the women that want to depreciate their sex to men ? and what object can they have in opening men’s eyes, as they profess ?

They are only too frightened that the men over whom they have any influence may find some woman or girl who *is* pure and loving, the very contact with whom would make them loathe themselves; and oh, it makes me so angry to hear the cant of the day about women—the perpetual slanderous tongue that acknowledges neither goodness nor purity nor truth in anything or anyone. What about the Florence Nightingales, the women who nursed our sick soldiers through the Crimea? What about the thousands of good self-denying creatures who are labouring year after year in the midst of repulsive poverty and sickness and crime?—who nurse men when they get ill, who comfort them when they are in trouble; where do they go when they find the world unsympathetic, when their ambition is disappointed, but to a woman! And

even when a woman has behaved badly to them, where do they go for sympathy but, in nine cases out of ten, to another woman ?”

Milly Scarlett’s face is flushed and eager as she bends forward, speaking quickly, with a real interest in her subject. Mrs. Craven looks amused; Colonel Brooke watches her keenly, with a certain admiration of her enthusiasm. George Thornton steadily contemplates his well-varnished boots.

“You judge women,” continues Mrs. Scarlett, almost passionately, “by a few hundreds whom you meet in society, and whom you yourselves have spoiled. A woman is beautiful, or perhaps not—perhaps somebody has made her the fashion, and whether you care the least bit about her or not, you all run after her, crowd round her carriage by the park railings,

troop into her box at the Opera, surround her whenever she appears in public, and do your very best to make her believe she is something more than mortal. The chances are, you don't care for her—she doesn't amuse you a bit, she is ridiculously vain, utterly wanting in tact, and sometimes, presuming on her attractions, says very rude things; but it's the thing to be seen with her, so you pass by a score of good-hearted young women, who would be glad to talk to you, with a little distant bow, and move on, to swell the circle round the one who, except for vanity, doesn't care whether you are there or a thousand miles away. Or else, perhaps a woman is clever and amuses you, so you go and lounge about in her drawing-room two or three times a week, if it doesn't look too pointed; or you drop into a chair by her in the Row, or contrive to sit next her at dinner,

because she is such ‘awfully good company,’ and takes away the *ennui* which is the cause of all your lies now-a-days. You haven’t the resources, you know, of your grandfathers, who sat down to dinner at three, and went on drinking until they were helped in blissful unconsciousness to bed.—Or perhaps,” Mrs. Scarlett continues, speaking more evenly and quietly now—“perhaps a woman is only beautiful, and you fall in love with her sheer beauty, and she may sit up to receive you exquisitely dressed, looking faultlessly perfect; and you are content to sit and stare at her, and tell her over and over again that she is the most lovely creature in the world. It doesn’t matter the least what it is the woman is liked for, whether fashion, wit, or beauty—anyone who has a great many lovers, who hears herself perpetually

praised and admired, can't help getting spoiled and heartless; she can't care for all the men who fall in love with her, but her vanity won't let her be quite honest with them; she likes to have them about her, it looks well and draws more—and besides, it makes other women envy her."

"Stop and take breath, Milly!" interrupts George Thornton, in the half affectionate, half impertinent tone she has known him too long to resent. "What a pity we haven't got a short-hand writer here!"

"Oh, I don't mind being teased a bit," laughs Mrs. Scarlett good-humouredly, "and I haven't half finished yet. So, as I was saying, you take a certain class of women, whom you yourselves have spoiled, and sit in judgment on them afterwards, as the true types of all the sex. Girls bore you—you 'go in for married women,' as you say, not remembering, of course, that if they

were what they should be, they wouldn't have anything to say to you. What are the girls to do if they want to be noticed and admired, as most naturally they do? Why, either they must try to copy that fastness which seems so enormously attractive to men, or else marry a man with money, who can put them in a position they can't help envying."

"My dear Mrs. Scarlett!" interrupts Colonel Brooke, "that's the very root of the matter. No man can feel sure now-a-days that he is being married for love if he has any money or position at all; he only fancies he is being made the stepping-stone to a girl's ambition. She wants to marry him that she may flirt with his friends, and have an establishment of her own, and go out without a chaperon. If you could only dream (for you don't see half) how eldest sons and fellows with

money are pestered out of their lives. The invitation cards stuck all over their chimney glasses ; the millions of flattering little notes. In fact, they are toadied until they're ready to turn to anything, only to get away from it all. And the other poor fellows without a shilling may be ever so good-looking, and amusing, and faultlessly got up, but who cares a rush for them, except to lead a cotillon, or waltz with, or fill a vacant place at dinner. I mean what girl?—because, of course, their being poor doesn't matter to women who don't want to marry them. And if by chance they do fall in love with some fresh pretty girl, and she seems fond of them, don't they know that a week later, if she gets the chance, she'll engage herself to any little beast of a fellow who happens to have a title or a heap of money?"

"Of course," says Mrs. Scarlett, "you

will keep in that one groove of the women who live and breathe in the world of fashion. As if there were not thousands and thousands who would take a man because they loved him, and be true to him, and never want anyone else. You want an exotic, and then are angry because it won't bloom out of a hothouse. Why not look for a fresh, simple girl, such as there are hundreds of?"

"Oh, yes; but they aren't amusing, you know," answers Colonel Brooke plaintively.

"Ah," says Milly, laughing, "I'm afraid you want too much. A woman of the world, yet quite unsophisticated—clever, but not self-conscious—beautiful, but not desiring admiration—a woman that every man would envy you (or, like all men, you wouldn't value her), and who would not

have a look or thought for anyone but you."

"I never dreamed of anything so impossibly charming, I assure you, Mrs. Scarlett."

"Milly !" interposes Mrs. Craven at this juncture, casting a look at the clock ; "we shall never have time to dress before dinner if you and Colonel Brooke don't make a speedy end to your discussion. And we want to see the beginning of the piece."

The Colonel takes the hint and rises ; young Thornton prepares to accompany him.

"I won't injure my reputation for good dinners by asking either of you to stay and dine," smiles Mrs. Scarlett. "My cook is out for the day. And now-a-days you men think of nothing in the world but that one great event."

"What a calumny ! You always say we

live for nothing else, but I assure you that's another fallacy. The society of charming women——”

“Won't make up for an indifferent dinner. Oh, you forget how often you've treated me to tirades upon the pet subject. 'People aren't fit to live, you know, who can't appreciate a good dinner'—(mimicking him)—and anyone who gives you a bad one ought to be hanged, or drowned, or something.”

“Good-bye,” says Colonel Brooke laughing. “I'm bound to get the worst of it this afternoon.”

“Good-bye—good-bye, Georgy. You've been very rude to us this afternoon, but we forgive you.”

She gives him her hand, and looks ever so kindly into his eyes. His anger against the sex melts as snow in sunshine, and he whispers eagerly,

“ I may come and see you sometimes still, mayn’t I ? ”

“ Of course you may. ”

Since that day Georgy has both believed and deceived the sex ; he hasn’t turned misanthrope yet, and is generally to be found in close attendance upon a pretty woman.

CHAPTER XIV.

BY THE FIRELIGHT.

MIDNIGHT booms from Big Ben. Mrs. Scarlett and Laura Craven are sitting over a roasting fire in the former's bedroom, brushing their hair after dismissing their maids. Not an original situation in a novel, granted, still less so out of one, for if there is a time dear to the female heart for these little *épanchements*, restrained at other times, it is the witching hour of night. Brush in hand, tresses unbound, luxuriously reclined in well-stuffed arm-chairs, a greater degree of affection

and confidence breathes itself into the spirit of the fair friends ; and even women who are only acquaintances cannot resist the temptation of a gossip over the bed-room fire, particularly if it's very late, and they know they ought to have been in bed hours ago. Women never quarrel at these midnight *séances* ; they make common cause, and probably arraign the absent pretty sharply, but for each other the claws are sheathed in the soft velvet paws, and perfect harmony presides at the meeting. I never heard of women falling out upon these occasions.

The two friends are perfectly *d'accord* as they sit making faint pretence of brushing their long loose hair—a sight worth looking at in these days, when a wealth of tresses is somewhat rare, though not so rare as men affect to think. The four little feet ranged on the fender are thrust

into dainty satin slippers, and it seems a thousand pities the fair ones can't "receive" in the *peignoirs* that are so undeniably becoming.

"Really!" utters Mrs. Craven in a tone of genuine chagrin, as she contemplates the long meshes of her golden hair against the firelight. "It's a great shame when one has good hair not to be able to show it; of course I know men think it's only put on, and the women who haven't got good hair always try to make them believe everyone else's artificial. That horrid Mrs. Carlton told Captain Gore she was in at Douglas's when I bought mine."

"What does it matter?" answers Mrs. Scarlett. "I don't care myself what people think or say."

"What nonsense, Milly! As if you wouldn't like to go about with it all down your back—you know it's magnificent.

When we were at Biarritz last year, I wanted to let mine down because people said it was false, only that disagreeable, provoking Harry wouldn't let me."

"I suppose he doesn't want anyone else to admire it."

Mrs. Craven makes a contemptuous little *moue*.

"As if he cared! I might wear a wig for aught he knows. Now and then, when I'm trailing it out before the glass, he says, in his gruff way, 'Don't be so vain, Laura,' and when I ask him, just in fun, if it isn't lovely, he only remarks, 'It's a good deal too long, and not the colour he likes'—as if your husband knew or cared a bit if you were a Venus when you've been married to him five years! What fools women are to marry!" with a little vicious jerk of the brush. "Oh, Milly, what a goose you are, and how sorry you'll be for it!"

"I!" echoes Mrs. Scarlett, gazing into the fire with a bright look stealing into her eyes. "No, I don't think I shall."

"Only consider all you're going to give up! Here you are at five and twenty, your own mistress, well off, living in London, with heaps of men in love with you. Oh, how I wish I was a widow! I don't mean that I want Harry to die; of course it would make me wretched anything happening to him, but if I could only have married some rich old man I hated, who would have died and left me all his money, oh, how happy I should be! How I wish I was a widow!"

"It's not such a very enviable position," Mrs. Scarlett interrupts bitterly.

"You know, Milly," proceeds Laura oracularly, "I've completely thrown myself away. Of course I *am* pretty, I need not have any false modesty with you, for you

flatter me as much as anyone ; if I hadn't been goose enough to marry Mr. Craven I should be enjoying myself most thoroughly now. Of course I should have no end of men in love with me, as you have."

"A great many more, I should hope," interrupts Milly.

"Well, I should be quite satisfied with as many. But now I'm married, as soon as men get too attentive, I'm obliged to assume an air of iced propriety, because, whatever people may say, I don't flirt. Do I? And you—well you had four letters this very morning ; I recognised the writing of two, and I knew the monograms of the others. All full of protestations and despair, of course, eh, Milly?" and Mrs. Craven laughs her pretty but rather vacant laugh.

"Now just look at me, shut up in a dull country place month after month, with hardly any society, and a husband who is

farming all day, and goes to sleep and snores regularly every evening after dinner. If he'd only let me come up to town for the season—but no! just three weeks to the very day is all I get of London, though he knows I adore it; and then he prowls about all the time, looking as if it would be his death. Men are so abominably selfish. Sometimes, Milly—I daresay you won't believe it, because I'm always cheerful and happy when you're with me—but sometimes I cry for a whole day together; and when Harry comes in, though he sits opposite me at dinner, he never even sees that my eyes are red. We don't quarrel, and I daresay people quote us as a model pair, because our names are never coupled with anybody else, but——” and a long sigh, a wistful glance in the fire, finish the sentence.

“Everyone is unhappy, sometimes, I

suppose," says Mrs. Scarlett reflectively, drawing the comb lingeringly through the masses of her dark hair—"everyone. Everyone at least who has a vestige of romance or ideality. Oh, how I envy the dull, stupid, commonplace, phlegmatic people, who never can suffer great disappointment because they never have great aspirations—the people who live in their poor, vulgar, narrow-minded, circumscribed world, and are happy and contented because they never dream of anything higher, happier, better!"

"My dear Milly!" interrupts Laura plaintively, "don't be highflown, or I shall think you're talking at me. I'm not clever, and you are. I am one of the empty-headed, frivolous sort. I never reflect, I haven't got any aspirations, as you call them, I don't go into paroxysms about something far off in the clouds that I can't reach, and

only break my heart in striving after ; all I want is commonplace, tangible, real. I want to live in town, to have a nice house, the handsomest ponies in London, and to be a widow."

"Hush, Laura !"

"My dear Milly, do understand me—not Harry's widow, but the widow of some horrid dyspeptic old wretch that I never saw. However, since that shocks you, I abandon the idea, and consent to remain as I am ; for Harry isn't jealous, and society certainly allows one a very fair amount of latitude in these days."

"And I," says Milly passionately—"I only want to love with my whole soul, to be loved as much in return, and never to see or want or think of anyone else. I would love his faults as well as his virtues—I would sacrifice everything in the world,

small or great, for him, but he must do the same for me."

Mrs. Craven leans back in her chair, to indulge in a perfect peal of laughter. Milly laughs too, but there is a bitter ring in her voice.

"My dear! don't you think I'm aware of the highly ridiculous nature of my speech? Of course people never love like that in this world—or, if they do, one of them dies. Only while one is wishing, as you were just now, one may as well wish for the impossible as the possible."

"I wasn't laughing at that. What amused me was to hear you talk about loving one man, and wanting no one else, when you know you are the coldest, most heartless creature in the world, and are never satisfied unless you have half a dozen lovers at the same time. I'm laughing, too, to think of your expecting such devotion

from a husband. Poor Captain Charteris ! My dear Milly, he's very handsome, and for the present no doubt he'll be all your fondest expectations can desire ; but don't insist on too much by-and-by, or you'll both be miserable. But of course I know it's only talk with you—you have no heart really. You'll have a great deal to answer for. I know several men whom you've made dreadfully unhappy."

"Nonsense, Laura, nothing of the sort. They did not really care for me. It is quite enough to be indifferent to a man, and he fancies himself mad about you—he can't possibly live out of your sight ; and the very same man, if you loved him, if he knew he could make you miserable, if you showed yourself delighted when he came, and wretched when he went away, would be bored with you in a month. You would come to be that 'poor little girl who's so

awfully fond of me,' instead of 'the woman I'd sell my soul for.' Indifference is the strength of those who possess it—they can always command lovers and friends. Men are horribly disappointing."

"Harry is, I know," responds Laura pathetically.

"De deux amants, il y'a toujours un qui aime, et un qui se laisse aimer," says Mrs. Scarlett. "This world's very unsatisfactory," with a sigh; "everything is at cross-purposes, and the worst of it is that we all know it—first from hearsay, and then from experience; but that doesn't prevent our going again to the broken cistern for water."

"What's that noise?" cries Mrs. Craven, suddenly jumping up.

"It's only Faithful," answers Mrs. Scarlett. "He always sleeps on the mat outside my door, and doesn't understand hearing my voice at this time of night." And

opening the door she lets him in. The dog walks solemnly up to her as she resumes her seat by the fire, and sits down in front of her with his nose thrust into her hand, and his loving, faithful dog's eyes turned up to her, while his tail gives slow thuds of contentment on the rug.

“Oh, Milly, how can you have that horrid dog in here?” And Milly answers smiling, “I know how to appreciate a true friend.”

“It's time we were in bed,” cries Laura; and the friends part with a kiss, and Faithful resumes his guard of honour on the mat outside.

But Milly does not go to bed just yet; she sits down again by the fire, and looks thoughtfully into the burning coals. I should like to describe her to you, but the task is more than difficult. I may well ink my pen and begin fifty different sheets of paper, in the endeavour to give any

adequate description of Milly Scarlett.

How can one be expected to reconcile paradoxes? To attempt to describe some people is like taking the bits of glass out a kaleidoscope. Leave them where they are, they present an harmonious whole; take them to pieces, they are only so many bits of different sized and coloured glass, that put you at your wit's end to match.

There are some women the very essence of whose nature is change—who cannot be, because they cannot feel, always the same—who have a thousand different moods, caprices, and feelings. To this class Mrs. Scarlett belonged. I think she had in her nearly all the attributes that go to make a good and bad woman.

What shall I say of her? First, then, she was intensely a woman; womanly in her instinct to side with what she loved rather than what was strictly just; woman-

ly in her championship of the weak; womanly in her appreciation of the elegancies and refinements of polished life; womanly beyond all in her intense desire to please, her love of approbation, and the inordinate value she set on personal appearance and manner in both sexes. A brilliant imagination, a ready wit, a charming manner to those she liked, a very frigid and haughty one to those who displeased her—a woman who inspired spontaneously either great liking or the reverse.

Milly was very bright and blithe sometimes, very bitter and disappointed at others. In one mood she would revel in life and excitement, in another she would rail at Fate and the world—would protest indignantly against the cruelty that gives blessings and saps all power of enjoyment out of them. At these times she suffered intensely from seeing how fair life might

be, and how rotten it is at the core. She had that intense, supreme longing after happiness that is the keenest torture of all large minds, because their disappointment is proportionate. "I have lived and loved—let me die!" had been her motto with Thekla once. She had set up to herself an idol, had hung it with the precious gifts of her love and faith and truth, as all these passionate-hearted women do, and it had been, after all, a poor clay figure, beautiful in no one's eyes but hers. She awoke from her delusion, but her own heart alone knew the exceeding bitterness of that tardy discovery. To learn to disbelieve where one's whole faith has centred—what sharper sting of all sore pains poor flesh is heir to?

"I have no heart," she had been used to say, with the passionate tears, themselves a contradiction, glistening in her eyes—"I don't believe in love, or truth, or happiness,

or anything else. We are born to be wretched and miserable, and to have everything we care for taken away from us.

“ There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.”

With which favourite quotation she would walk up and down the room with flashing eyes, and then, flinging herself into a chair, would launch a further tirade against the bitterness of life. And if anyone, coming in a little later, would bring in some pitiful story of want, or sickness, or suffering, she would be filled with a bitter, contrite sense of her own ingratitude for all the blessings she enjoyed, and feel sorely ashamed of her petulant discontent, however reluctant she might be to own it. I don't think people with natures like Milly Scarlett's can ever be really happy or contented; they want too much

—there is no *via media* about them. They want perpetual extremes—life must be all rose-colour, skies one serene unchanging azure, the tiniest cloud casts a dark shadow upon them; a trifling annoyance, that less sensitive minds would scarcely acknowledge the presence of, is a bitterness to them. They want always to be loved, always to be young, always to be happy, always to be in the vortex of pleasurable excitement; and so, because they have such large powers of appreciation, and such large desires, they pass unconsciously by those small pleasures that make up the sum of ordinary folk's happiness, and are nearly always unhappy in straining after those great gifts that the most fortunate mortals only attain to twice or three times in a lifetime.

But if Milly Scarlett was not in reality a very happy or contented woman, she kept

the fox well concealed, for her friends and acquaintances, with one or two exceptions, thought her a most enviable person. She was always bright and smiling, always had a little court about her, lived in a charming house, and seemed to possess every advantage that a woman not too unreasonable could desire. And, on the whole, she was decidedly a favourite, especially with men. Charming was the word they invariably applied to her, if they liked her at all. And I think the great secret of her pleasing powers was her adaptability—the readiness with which she entered into all that pleased and interested those who cared for her—her possession of the intuitive sympathy that is the essence of tact, but is also far more than tact.

It has often struck me that the portrait of ill-fated Julie de l'Espinasse, drawn of her, at her own request, by her faithful

d'Alembert, might have served equally well for Milly Scarlett—the greater part of it, at least :

“ You have a noble and graceful carriage, your face is full of soul and character. You please by your style, by your exquisite taste, and by the tact you have in saying what will be most agreeable to everyone. You are frank by nature, and discreet by reflection. You abhor malice and folly ; you are not envious. Everyone seems to you equally to be pitied, and you would not change your fate for that of any living being. You are very good-natured, but you have both temper and dryness. These latter defects are not natural to you, but have grown upon you from being wounded and crossed in your tastes and feelings. In trying to be hard to yourself, to crush your own nature, you have become hard towards those who love

you. I do not know anyone who pleases so generally as you, nor anyone who is more sensible of her power. You do not refuse even to make the first advance, when the person you wish to please does not take the initiative ; on this point you sacrifice your pride to your self-love. I must confess, too, that you are not quite so difficult to please as I think you ought to be ; the delicacy and nicety of your tact ought to make you more particular in the choice of your friends. The desire of having a court about you makes you too complaisant ; and you don't even turn your back upon a bore, provided he is very devoted to you. One quality you are exacting about, even to excess—it is your extreme sensitiveness on the subject of good style and manner. The want of these is scarcely atoned for, in your eyes, by the most tender devotion."

CHAPTER XV.

MILLY.

MILLY could not remember her mother. She had lived childhood and girlhood through with her father, and they were devoted to each other. The sight of the most doting mother had never made her feel the want of one. What greater, tenderer, more perfect love could anyone have given her than this father, to whom she was all in all, who was all in all to her? She had grown up free, uncontrolled, uncontradicted. She had an impulsive, passionate nature, was bright, vivacious, and a favourite with most people, an idol

with her father and the two old servants.

Milly had had great ideas from her very childhood. She thought a good deal of fine horses, handsome carriages, and elegant attire. She chafed a little at times because the glory of the house was departed, and money failed to keep up the old place as in the former days; but she would rather have cut her tongue out than bewail it in the presence of her father, since it was to the extravagance of his youth their present impoverished condition was due. Her girlhood had been happy enough. She was clever, and her father had taken care she should be thoroughly well educated, whatever else money lacked for. But her education had been no school routine. He had wandered about with her to pleasant foreign towns, where she picked up languages, and had lessons in music and singing from first-rate masters.

“I don’t think my little girl will ever be a great beauty—not great enough to dazzle the world,” he used to say, fondly stroking her dark locks,—“in spite of those eyes, so we must give her something to put her on a level with the empty-headed beauties against the time when she’ll want a recommendation. Poor little girl! she won’t have any fortune—we must give her something.”

Milly often cried bitterly in secret because she was not a beauty; indeed, she made up her mind that she was positively ugly—and this little girl had aspirations about love and power as big as any Empress of the world ever entertained. But at seventeen she was a great deal better looking than anyone expected she would be, and made an extremely favourable *début* in the world of fashion, under the auspices of her aunt. How proud and

glad her father was ! Will Milly ever forget, to her dying day, how the old man kissed and blessed her, with glad tears in his eyes, when they returned together from her first ball !

“ I think my little girl will be able to hold up her head with the best of them,” he said, in a voice quivering with pride and gladness ; and not one of the thousand flatteries she has received since [ever fell more sweetly on Milly’s ear.

She married very soon—a man rich, good-looking, devoted to her. I don’t think he was a bit like the hero of her dreams—certainly he was not clever. Some men said he was a good fellow ; others agreed with Mr. Vivian in calling him “ the biggest fool out !” Big he was, florid and well-looking, of the country gentleman type, fond of sport, devoted to horses and dogs—the sort of man to whom a wife is

“Something better than his dog,
A little dearer than his horse.”

If Milly chose to spend her passionate young heart on loving such a man, the end was sure to be disappointment. He could no more understand her high flights, as he called them, than the dead languages; nor could he sympathise with her ardent nature. He was a fine animal, and she had to make the best of him; and there were many things that made it a tolerably easy task. She delighted in riding and driving, and she might have the handsomest horses money could buy; she had the real woman's love of “silk attire,” and she might spend what money she liked on dress or anything else—it gratified him to show her off, for he was proud of her; and so she was obliged to satisfy the hunger of her poor little heart with the gilded husks. She would have liked to adore and worship her golden calf, but he would not let her—

it irked him ; she expected him to be always making love to and petting her, and he had as much idea of doing it as the aforesaid golden calf would have of returning its worshipper's adoration.

And then, ah ! bitter, irreparable loss, her father died, and she felt so lonely when the old man was gone—that beloved one who had so often poured oil upon the troubled waters. She wanted something to cling to, and all her love for her husband came rushing tenfold back again. He was sorry for her, and tried to be kind and sympathetic, but he was one of those people who have not the remotest conception of what sympathy means, who with their greatest effort could not give any human being so much comfort as the faithful hound who thrusts his nose into your hand, and looks up at you with honest, sorrowful eyes.

Then he broke his neck out hunting, and if he had been all her ardent temperament desired, Milly could not have grieved for him more. After the manner of her sex, she endowed him with more than human virtues—everything that had ever angered her in him she banished religiously from her mind; all that was kind, good, loving of him in the old time came back, and she longed for him with an intense, weary longing, that blanched her face and dimmed her eyes with bitter tears.

All this until one day—one day, as she sat alone in her room, thinking always of that one thing, saying to herself that her life was done, that never in all the years to come, however long, however weary, would she take comfort or pleasure, the thought came to her that she would look over his desk, where, perhaps, she might

find something to bring back the dear one more fully to her memory. With a heavy heart she crossed the hall into the room that had been his, where his whips, and guns, and fishing-tackle were left by her orders just as when he was alive—where the antlers and the foxes' brushes, the stuffed birds and gigantic fish, his much-prized trophies, reminded her at every step of *him*. Oh! only to hear the loud, brisk voice once more—only to see the big frame, of whose strength she had been so proud! But there came no answer, save the chill empty echo in her heart, “Never more!” She sat down and sobbed aloud, grievously; the pain seemed greater than she could bear.

At last she went to his desk, that stood in one corner of the room, and sat down before it. She found a picture of herself, a bundle of her letters, a few bills. Pre-

sently she turned over the blotting-book ; in it was a letter in a woman's hand, and a sheet of paper with a few words in his writing. She sat staring blankly at it, put it down once, then took it up again. It was dated the day of his death. O God ! and she had believed that, if his was not a passionate nature, he had at least given her all the love he had to give—she had never doubted that he was faithful to her !

When the years had passed, she could say to herself that it was for the best she had discovered this ; it was a sharp remedy, perhaps, but it was better to be undeceived than to go on sorrowing so bitterly after a man who had not been worthy of her. Her friends wondered sometimes why they could never bring her to talk of the husband whom she had seemed to love so passionately in his life-time.

As she sits to-night over her fire, after Mrs. Craven has left her, she thinks over this past time—of her husband, and of the men who have loved her. Perhaps she has been cruel sometimes; perhaps she has revenged the wrongs done by the guilty upon the innocent; perhaps she has taken little heed of men's feelings who, after all, were sincere and honest in their love for her. Well, all that is over now; henceforth she will keep to one man only; she will never have a thought save for him—oh! how she will love him!—how she loves him already! Pray God he may be good to her! It is barely three weeks since she first saw him, and her whole life seems bound up in him. From the moment that he entered the box in Paris, she loved his handsome *débonnaire* face; she felt to him that intense attraction that she had had for his brother. That very night she knew, whatever she

might hear of him, she would marry him, if he asked her—if he were penniless, gambler, spendthrift, whatever he might be. With everyone else she has always been confident of herself; she has known exactly her own value, and the value set on her by others; with Adrian she is diffident, dissatisfied with herself, so eager to please him that she fears to defeat her wish by being over-anxious. And this is the woman who has been called hundreds of times cold, passionless, heartless.

A few weeks later Captain Charteris is calling at a house in May Fair—not Mrs. Scarlett's. The lady who lives here is a very old friend of Adrian's, has petted him since he was a boy at Eton, listened to all his confidences, given him advice, generally good, from a worldly point of view. She is a thorough woman of the world, understands men as well as it is possible for a

woman to do, never bores them, never expects too much from them, is always glad to see them, and never reproaches them if they seem occasionally to forget her existence for a time. She knows they will come back. Men rarely desert a house long where the hostess is amusing, the dinners perfect, the cellar unexceptionable, and they may smoke good cigars *ad libitum*. She is considerably past her *jeunesse*, but looks extremely well; a judicious arrangement of lights and rose-coloured blinds will do a great deal for anyone who studies them, and she always wears black.

Perhaps, of all the men who come to her house, she cares the most for Adrian. She knows him exactly for what he is, but that knowledge does not make it one whit less pleasant to her to look at his handsome face, and be caressed by his charming manner. This is what she would say of

him, but only to herself in the strictest confidence. He has one idea in the world—himself!—how he shall dress, and feed, and clothe his handsome person; he succeeds perfectly. He is not conceited; it is too self-evident that he is exceptionally good-looking; he knows that he is pleasing to the eyes of almost every woman he meets, therefore he need take no trouble to amuse or please them further than by a smile, a caressing glance, a few whispered words. Only let them alone, they will lionise, adore, make love to him, and save him all the trouble. He cares very little really about women; as long as he can smoke good cigars, drink champagne for his dinner every day, and sit up playing cards till two o'clock in the morning, he can dispense with the women, except for vanity. Good-natured enough, if it does not put him out of the way; amusing, if

he chooses to take the trouble. If there is a man in the world calculated to make a woman who loves him wretched, that man is Adrian Charteris.

"I haven't seen you this age," he says, coming into the room, and greeting her very warmly. "You're looking awfully well! I suppose you've heard the news?"

"Yes," she answered. "Shall I congratulate you?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I think it's rather a good thing, but I want to hear your opinion."

"Will you break it off if I don't approve?" she asks, laughingly.

"Of course, like a shot!"

"Then I'm afraid you're not very desperately in love."

"Desperately! Well, I never was *desperately* anything in my life—except unhappy about you once" (with laughing eyes).

“Oh! I like her tremendously! By-the-way, have you ever met her?”

“I don’t think so; tell me all about her.”

“Well, she isn’t a beauty exactly, but quite good-looking enough for anything; wonderfully good eyes and hair—all her own.”

“Of course,” she says, with a scarcely perceptible smile.

“No mistake about it. I’ve seen it down. Knows how to dress; looks uncommon well upon a horse, neat foot, and makes the most of it.”

“Is she clever?”

“Oh yes, knows everything, and isn’t always ramming it down your throat, thank Heaven!”

“And rich, I hear.”

“Oh, the money’s all right, or it wouldn’t have suited a poor fellow like me. Three thousand a year.”

“My dear boy, with your face you ought to have married twenty.”

“Yes; but it’s difficult to get a *nice* woman with twenty thousand a year, and this one is decidedly nice.”

“Well, then, it is evident you have every reason for congratulation. Accept mine,” and she puts her hand into his.

Adrian takes and kisses it gracefully.

“But all the same you know, matrimony’s an awful business. I can’t make up my mind to it a bit, yet.”

“Do you remember what you used to say about it?”

“Oh, yes; I said they ought to write that quotation from Dante’s ‘Inferno’ over the church doors: ‘*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch’entrate*’; and, by George, I’m not at all sure that I’ve changed my opinion. I daren’t think about it, that’s the fact. Fancy having to go to bed at eleven o’clock!

Why, how the deuce should I be able to lie in bed all the morning if I did that?—and how the deuce should I get through the day if I didn't sleep through the first part of it? Then, perhaps, she'll object to my smoking all over the house. Why, I should be the most miserable dog out without my cigar. I hope to goodness she won't mind my going to the Club of an evening. I should think she'd be sensible, and give me three nights a week, if I'm pretty attentive the other four."

"Very likely. She has been married once, and won't expect as much from a husband as a girl would."

"A girl! Faugh! my dear Henrietta, I wouldn't marry a girl with fifty thousand a year. Not my line. They ought to be kept in the schoolroom till they're married."

"Adrian!"

“ Well, *ma belle* ! ”

“ I heard something about your brother having been in love with Mrs. Scarlett—is it true ? ”

“ Poor old Guy ! ” he utters lazily, smiling the smile that makes him so good to look at. “ I’m afraid there’s something in it. He went off like a lunatic, and has never been heard of since. I couldn’t get it out of Milly, though I tried. Fancy cutting out your elder brother with a title, and all those thousands a year, by George ! I never heard of his being downright spoony on a woman before. There was something very queer about it, too. When I got to Paris, of course I made straight for his room, and, to my utter astonishment, found an awfully pretty little girl there, quite a child. She jumps up and rushes to me, then, finding her mistake, stands staring and trembling all over ; blushes crimson, and turns

her back upon me. I naturally asked if I could be of any use to her in Guy's absence, but she seemed in a horrible fright, and said 'No, thank you,' to everything—in fact, that's all I got out of her. Then his man comes rushing in, and beckons me out, but not a word can I get out of him either. Then Guy, in frantic haste, seeming in a tremendous way about something, bullies me for having spoken to the girl, and finally disappears with her for three days. The plot thickens. However, I naturally take advantage of the good thing Providence has thrown in my way—make love to the charming widow, she reciprocates, and here I am."

"A strange story," says his companion, thoughtfully. "Some little school-girl, I suppose, who had fallen in love with him and run away from school or home."

"Very possibly—can't say. She was

sweetly pretty. *I* shouldn't have taken her back home, which I expect is what he did. But I must be off. I have to take my beloved one to Hurlingham, and she doesn't like to be kept waiting. I must educate her to my unpunctual habits. I'm half an hour late now."

"Perhaps she will have gone without you—or *with* some one else."

Adrian's only reply was a smile; but a smile that expressed more than words.

"Good-bye," he said, taking both her hands.

"God bless you!" she says, in a voice that trembles a very little. "I suppose you won't quite forget me when you are married—you'll find your way here after the first six months?"

"Six months!" he answers gaily. "My *lune de miel* will be a very short one, I can tell you; and when that is over, I daresay

you will have a great deal more of my company than you will care for. I shall not ask you to call on Milly. I don't want you to know each other."

"Why?"

"Oh! you'd be sure to hate each other—you're too much in the same *genre*. And besides, if later on I want to abuse her to you (men always do abuse their wives, I believe), I shall have your sympathising and partial ear, because you'll only hear one side. Adieu, *ma chère*," kissing her hand.

When he is gone, she presses her lips on the spot where he has kissed it.

"And that is the sort of man women with imagination and passion break their hearts about," she murmurs. "I daresay she knows quite well what he is. At all events, I do; and if I could I would have married him, and he would have been

charming to every woman but me. I can't help being sorry for her; but I hate her."

Five minutes later a barouche rolls past the window. An elderly and a young lady are in it. Adrian is bending forward to button Milly's glove, Milly radiant and charming. Henrietta sees them. "I hate her!" she murmurs. This time she does not say "I am sorry for her."

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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